

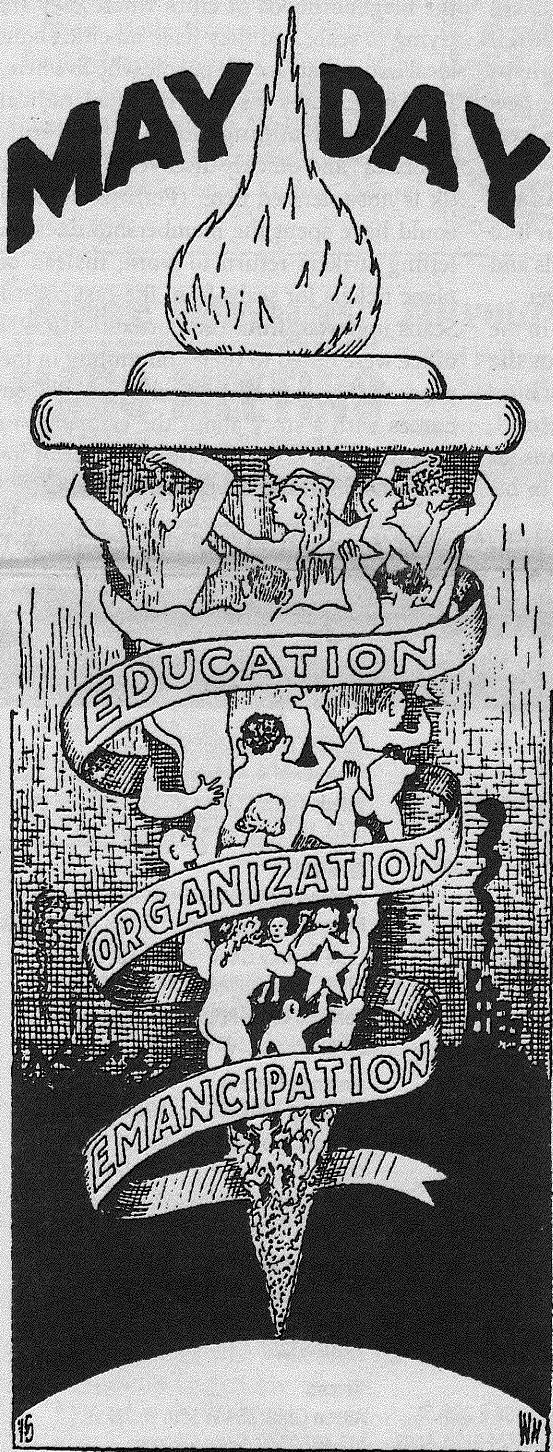
Industrial Worker

★ ORGANIZATION ★ EDUCATION ★ EMANCIPATION ★

May 2001

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The Workers' Holiday

BY ARTHUR J. MILLER

From all corners of the world, upon every land that humans tread, among those who toil for their bread, May Day stirs the spirit of discontent.

From the board rooms of the corporate masters, within the halls of their political lackeys, and in the studios of their paid deceivers, May Day stirs a sense of dread.

For upon this day the past becomes the present, and the present becomes an opening to future possibilities. May Day, the International Day of Labor.

May Day, as the International Day of Labor, finds its roots back on May 1, 1867, when massive parades were held for the eight-hour day. Finding that moral persuasion had little effect, a general strike was called for the eight-hour day to begin on May 1, 1886. Hundreds of thousands of workers went on strike that day across the U.S. The next day even more workers joined in. Unfortunately, in Chicago the general strike was lost May 4 in the great repression. This was the aftermath of the police riot in Haymarket Square.

A protest rally was held that day regarding the unjust murders by police of striking workers. The police attacked the rally without cause, and some poor working stiff threw a bomb in self-defense. Eight labor activists,

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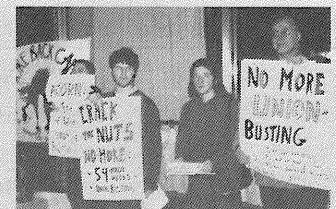
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Hawai'i teachers in state-wide strike

Schools, colleges close as teachers fight "education" governor **4**

National week of solidarity targets ACORN union-busting, lock-out **3**



"Wall-to-wall" business unionism promises lower wages, jurisdictional warfare

Carpenters leave AFL

BY JON BEKKEN

The 525,000-member United Brotherhood of Carpenters pulled out of the American Federation of Labor March 29, in a move that threatens to touch off jurisdictional warfare throughout the construction industry. Although the Carpenters were a founding member of the AFL, UBC President Douglas "Cash" McCarron has been threatening to break away for more than two years, complaining that the AFL-CIO is wasting dues money on a bureaucracy of hundreds of officials hired since AFL-CIO President John Sweeney took over in late 1995.

Many rank-and-filers believe the dispute is more related to McCarron's unsuccessful bid to head the AFL's Building Trades Council and to a series of jurisdictional disputes between the Carpenters and other building trades unions.

In a letter announcing the UBC Executive Board's decision to leave the AFL, McCarron said: "The AFL-CIO continues to operate under the rules and procedures of an era that passed years ago, while the industries that employ our members change from day to day. After five years I have seen nothing to indicate the AFL-CIO is seriously considering changes that would cure these problems, nor do I see any realistic chance that an investment of more time or resources by the UBC will alter those facts. And for that reason the (board) has voted unanimously to end our affiliation with the AFL-CIO."

The decision is both a financial and symbolic blow to the AFL-CIO. The Carpenters' dues amount to \$3 million a year in the federation's \$100 million-plus annual budget, and the 13-million-member AFL-CIO has been running an operating deficit in re-

cent years as it has simultaneously tried to step up its organizing and political activities.

Sweeney and AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Rich Trumka addressed the Carpenter's executive board in Las Vegas March 27 in a last-ditch effort to halt the withdrawal, but failed to change any minds.

In a short statement issued after the decision, Sweeney expressed his disappointment. "I expressed to the Carpenters executive board this week my belief that disaffiliation would be a loss for the Carpenters and a loss for the American labor movement."

Sweeney also sent an order to local and state labor councils to expel all UBC delegates as soon as the withdrawal was final. Sweeney added that the UBC owes some \$5 million in back dues and that the departure will spark a jurisdictional war with other crafts. (The amount of back dues is sharply contested; the Carpenters have underreported their membership for years, reducing their per capita payments by some \$1.5 million a year.)

Bringing Craft Unionism Into the Twentieth Century

The traditional lines of demarcation between the building trades have become increasingly arbitrary in recent decades, as contractors introduced new building supplies and techniques. The Carpenters (like other building trades) have responded by asserting jurisdiction over new work on the basis of its function, rather than the materials or tools involved. Thus, when wooden lathe was replaced with metal, the Carpenters claimed jurisdiction over the work despite objections from the Sheetmetal workers.

The Carpenters have also mounted sev-
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Privatization hits UK

BY GEORGE MONBIOT

"All too often the education process is entrusted to people who appear to have no understanding of industry and the path of progress," the European Roundtable of Industrialists complained in 1998. "The provision of education is a market opportunity and should be treated as such."

Companies have not been slow to respond. Some have donated free exercise books to British schools, with commercial messages imprinted on the blank pages. Others have handed out teaching materials. A pack about "puberty and menstrual health", kindly provided by Tampax, warns girls that sanitary pads are uncomfortable, unhygienic and environmentally damaging; Tampax tampons, by contrast, are good for you and good for the planet.

A school newspaper partly sponsored by Nestle published a page of children's poems and stories about Nestle products. A teaching pack from Coca-Cola instructs pupils that non-refillable bottles are more environmentally friendly than returnable ones.

But the sponsorship of teaching materials is the least of the market opportunities education now provides. The British government's education action zones are clusters of schools run by committees on which businesses must be represented. Last year the government launched a network of "city academies": urban secondary schools

partly run by the private sector.

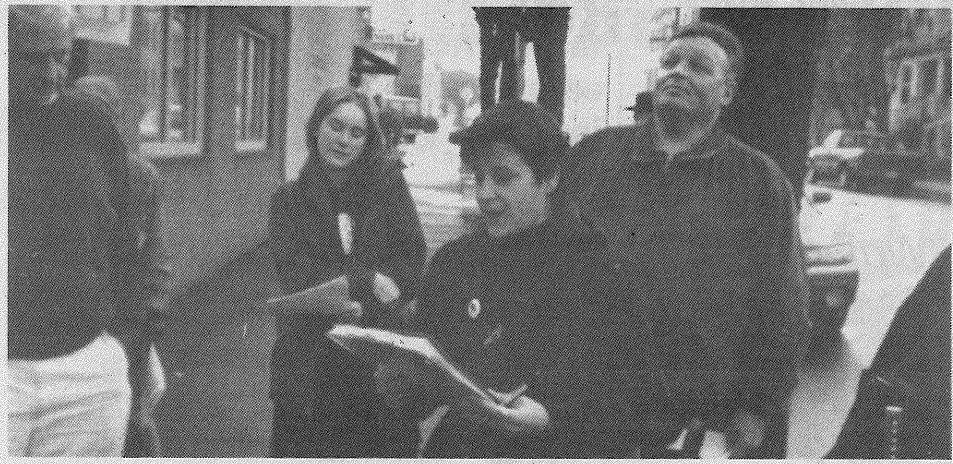
Market values are intruding into almost every aspect of public life. There are two principal means by which the market is coming to run the country.

The first is the establishment of quasi-corporate systems in public services. Management structures and pay scales mimic those of the private sector, and many services are sub-contracted to the private sector. New accounting procedures, such as 'capitation' in the NHS and "producer choice" in the BBC, make public services interchangeable with private ones. Ironically, many of the new accounting methods would never be tolerated in a real corporation, as staff who should be saving lives or making programmes are instead buried in paperwork.

But the most effective means of subjecting public services to the rigours of the market is to privatise them. Corporations are gradually taking over almost every public service in Britain. The government claims that by attracting private money it can start building more hospitals, schools, prisons, roads and public transport stations than it could have funded by itself.

However, the private sector will only invest in schemes which make money. It's not interested, for example, in renovating hospitals, as the budgets are too small to be worth pursuing. It's more interested in

continued on page 4



Jordana Sardo (center) speaking at a rally outside the Janus offices in Portland
PHOTO: MARK HARRIS

Janus Wobs win reinstatement

"Thank you to the Industrial Workers of the World and everyone who stood together with us and protested," said Jordana Sardo, after winning reinstatement March 16 at Harry's Mother, a division of Janus Youth Programs. IWW Industrial Union 670 represents workers at Harry's Mother.

A month earlier, Sardo, a member of the IWW bargaining team, and two other union members were scheduled to be illegally laid off from their positions at Harry's Mother by Janus Youth Programs. In response, the IWW filed an Unfair Labor Practice complaint with the National Labor Relations Board and organized protests at Janus headquarters.

The public campaign of phone calls, petitions, letters and demonstrations, during which it was revealed that Janus possesses over 2 million dollars in unrestricted assets, received national and international attention and participation. When the scheduled lay-off date rolled around, two layoffs were rescinded and the S.A.G.E. program was continued; however, Sardo's layoff went into effect on February 16. After over a month of pressure, Sardo was reinstated.

Now that all bargaining unit members are back on the job, workers are focused on winning a living wage from Janus and con-

vincing County Commissioners to fully fund Janus' program, Harry's Mother. The Multnomah County Commission is threatening budget cuts that might include the shelter and counseling services provided by Harry's Mother. Declining tax receipts have caused a \$20 million shortfall. IWW IU670 is pushing for those cuts to come out of the prison industry and from the cancellation of corporate tax giveaways.

Management has been stalling negotiations for months, refuses to even consider using Janus' substantial cash reserves to grant its workers a living wage, and recently claimed to be outraged that workers had not proposed to reduce their own pay. (Management and their union-busting law firm, of course, see no reason to cut their own six-figure salaries.)

Meanwhile, union organizing continues at other Janus operations. Workers at Streetlight and Porchlight shelters filed with the NLRB March 9th for IWW representation. Last year, workers at these two shelters lost their election by one vote. They have since won grievances, improvements, and a wage increase, building deeper and more seasoned support that should bode well for this year's election.

Seattle ACORN lock-out continues

BY JOHN PERSAK

Washington ACORN management continues its lockout, but not for long.

IWW members on strike at the Washington ACORN office have entered the sixth week of the strike at press time, and Wade Rathke, ACORN chief organizer, and Doug Bloch, the local boss, are showing weakness in the face of the continued pressure from the workers and the community.

ACORN management has broken more laws by employing scabs when workers have offered to return to work. The union has filed for a 10(j) injunction with the Labor Board in response. Each week, thousands of dollars of back pay for workers accumulate which will have to be paid to the workers when the employer loses their NLRB cases. If anything will destroy their organization, it will be management's decision to spend resources on expenses for strikebreakers, legal fees, fines and back pay. Yet Rathke in his arrogance of power claims that the IWW is out to "destroy the organization." The contradictions continue to pile up.

There have also been reports that Rathke is attempting to convince the Labor Board that the strike is "illegal"; last we checked it is still legal to go on strike, but perhaps Rathke is in on to something about the new Bush administration that the rest of us have yet to find out.

Support for the strike has been broad and generous. Strike funds continue to pour into the office to grant relief for unpaid bills and rent, though the struggle is not over yet.

Rathke also called the IWW office in the Bay Area, leaving an angry rant about the strike in Seattle (available via the web at <http://bari.iww.org>, for your listening pleasure), proving that he hasn't been capable thus far of hiding behind the local managers in his union-busting campaign.

A campaign by management to plant rumors in the local activist community has

taken a few hostages. Local "progressive" writer Geov Parrish at *Eat the State*, a local left tabloid in Seattle published rumors about the strike circulated by management, and published false information about the IWW claiming that the union has no contracts, no victories, and that the workers were being "misled" – he didn't check his facts. The article had the opposite effect, infuriating activists and supporters from all camps.

What the incident did reveal was that management has found some support from those who depend on anti-union progressives for their paycheck. The remarks were also racist, implying that people of color couldn't organize themselves without ACORN and that the strike was hurting them. So we see the true faces of the pro-management forces.

Strikers reported seeing as many as six scabs working at the Washington ACORN office, and management continues to deny that the strike is affecting them, as they attempt to rebuild the organization using scabs from out of state. But the scabs are having a hard time convincing people to join ACORN when they themselves do not even live in the neighborhoods or cities where they are trying to scab, and they have no clue about local issues that face the people who live here.

Three scabs visited the local radical bookstore, claiming the title of "anti-wobblies" and quickly discovered that their ilk is not tolerated here. (Perhaps ACORN could have spent the membership dues on letting strikers return to work, instead of plane tickets for scabs from the east coast.) Scabs imported from the Portland ACORN office were ousted to their community in the paper the *Portland Alliance*, who printed their names with a story about the campaign to organize ACORN staff. Efforts to recruit local scabs in Seattle have been fruitless.

Strike support can be sent to: Seattle IWW, 5215 Ballard Ave NW, Seattle, WA 98107.

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North Carolina

National actions back ACORN workers' rights

New York City

New York City Wobblies picketed outside ACORN's regional headquarters in downtown Brooklyn March 14. The group handed out copies of *To-Gather*, a newsletter of the ACORN Wobblies, and they demanded that ACORN management:

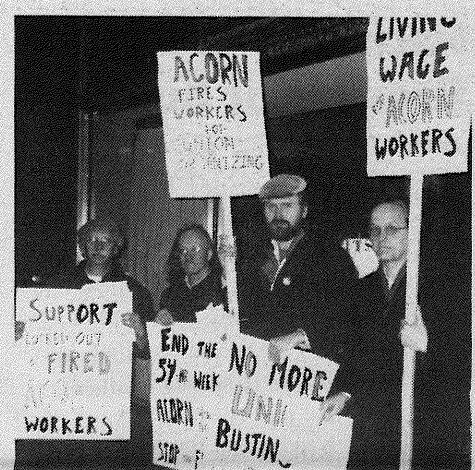
Recognize the Industrial Workers of the World as the collective bargaining agent for ACORN workers in Seattle and Philadelphia;

Reinstate fired organizers with back pay times five, as demanded by ACORN's own People's Platform;

End union-busting activity in all ACORN offices, including firings, captive meetings with management, and the use of scabs;

Declare to all ACORN workers in all ACORN offices that ACORN recognize and honor their right to organize with a union of their own choosing, and that ACORN management immediately recognize any union that receives authorization cards from a majority of non-management workers in any ACORN office without requiring an election;

Fully comply with the ACORN People's Platform in its relations with all ACORN employees whether organized in a union or not.



Picket at a Boston ACORN fundraiser

Around Our Union

East Bay IWW Busy

Since winning a unanimous pro-union vote in a February NLRB election to represent workers at the Berkeley Community Conservation Centers/Buyback Recycling Yard, East Bay (California) Wobs have been working on contract negotiations. The bosses are demanding a "management rights" clause that would in essence enable them to escape the contract any time they please, and has generally been stonewalling at the table. Wobblies are reaching out to the community to pressure management to become serious.

The Berkeley Curbside Recyclers contract is being reopened in response to high regional inflation. Local Wobs are seeking the same conditions the city offers its sanitation workers, which would require significant pay hikes.

New Phoenix GMB

Fellow Workers in Phoenix, Arizona, have petitioned the General Executive Board for a General Membership Branch charter. Local Wobs have been doing strike support, and reaching out to low-paid workers to help them organize to improve their conditions.

Upper Midwest Wobfest

Interested IWW members and friends are invited to a June 1-3 gathering to talk about all things IWW. The Upper Midwest Wobfest is being held at a rustic 260-acre farmsite near St. Cloud, MN. It's a follow-up to last summer's get-together in Madison.

Friday evening will begin with a dinner and social. Saturday and Sunday will feature reports and discussions on IWW campaigns, a campfire sing-along, etc. If you plan to attend, would like more information, or have suggestions, please contact: IWW - Madison GMB, Attn. Wobfest 2001, c/o Lakeside Press, 1334 Williamson St., Madison WI 53703 608-255-1800

ACORN worker's demands include a forty hour work week, safe working conditions, timely payment of salaries, and guaranteed lunch breaks.

No 'Friend of the People'

Eighteen members and friends of the Boston area branches of the IWW picketed Boston ACORN's annual "Friends of the People" banquet March 29, distributing hundreds of fliers and turning away a number of unionists and politicians who had been scheduled to attend the affair in the swank Omni Parker House hotel.

Massachusetts AFL-CIO President Robert Haynes, one of three scheduled honorees (the others were a banker and a state legislator) agreed to honor the picket line. While several unions were listed as sponsors of the events, few of their officials actually arrived. The few who did show generally kept on walking once they saw the picket line.

The action received good press in the *Boston Herald*. We will be following up with a letter to sponsoring organizations calling their attention to the dispute and inviting them to contact ACORN to let them know what they think of its union-busting.

Wobs protest scabbing

In Philadelphia, ACORN workers fired for organizing a union and IWW supporters picketed outside the Philadelphia ACORN office April 6 to protest ACORN's continued union-busting and the Philadelphia office's role in providing scabs for union-busting across the country. ACORN flew Philadelphia workers and its head organizer to Seattle to replace locked-out Seattle ACORN workers.

"We worked at least 54 hours a week and never received overtime pay. But ACORN finds money to fly workers from Philadelphia to scab on workers in Seattle who have filed for a union election and who want to



IWW members and supporters of workers rights joined ACORN workers fired for union organizing to protest the Philadelphia office's scabbery.

PHOTO: ROBERT HELMS

go back to work," says Ozzie Sims, a worker fired for organizing in Philadelphia. "Where is the members' money really going?"

Workers also stormed the office to demand that ACORN pay hundreds of dollars owed for unpaid overtime. When manager Jeff Ordover refused even to acknowledge their presence, they filed a claim for back pay with the Pennsylvania State Department of Labor.

United States, voted to back ACORN workers' efforts and contribute to the Seattle strike fund at their national convention. ACORN controls two SEIU locals, and its head is an international vice president of the union.

I've been workin' ...

I've been workin' in the neighborhood

All the live long day.

I've been workin' in the neighborhood

Signin' up members each day.

Can't you hear the workers strikin'?

They're wakin' up early in the morn!

Can't you hear the workers strikin'?

Boss won't you sign the form?

Boss won't you sign, boss won't you sign,

boss won't you sign the form? (repeat)

Someone's in the office with my boss

Someone's in the office with my boss

I know...

Someone's in the office with my boss

Tryin' to bust up the union show...

Nowhere to Hide

Wobblies flied the Phoenix ACORN office with the Week of Solidarity flier April 3, passing out fliers to ACORN workers and clients. Other actions took place in Denver, Minneapolis, Portland, and a second action in New York City.

SEIU Staff Union Support

UUR, an independent union representing SEIU field representatives across the

Join the IWW Today

The IWW is a union for all workers, a union dedicated to organizing on the job, in our industries and in our communities both to win better conditions today and to build a world without bosses, a world in which production and distribution are organized by workers ourselves to meet the needs of the entire population, not merely a handful of exploiters.

We are the Industrial Workers of the World because we organize industrially—that is to say, we organize all workers on the job into one union, rather than dividing workers by trade, so that we can pool our strength to fight the bosses together.

Since the IWW was founded in 1905, we have recognized the need to build a truly international union movement in order to confront the global power of the bosses and in order to strengthen workers' ability to stand in solidarity with our fellow workers no matter what part of the globe they happen to live on.

We are a union open to all workers, whether or not the IWW happens to have representation rights in your workplace. We organize the worker, not the job, recognizing that unionism is not about government certification or employer recognition but about workers coming together to address our common concerns. Sometimes this means striking or signing a contract. Sometimes it means refusing to work with an unsafe machine or following the bosses' orders so literally that nothing gets done. Sometimes it means agitating around particular issues or grievances in a specific workplace, or across an industry.

Because the IWW is a democratic, member-run union, decisions about what issues to address and what tactics to pursue are made by the workers directly involved.

TO JOIN: Mail this form with a check or money order for initiation and your first month's dues to: IWW, Post Office Box 13476, Philadelphia, PA 19101.

Initiation is the same as one month's dues. Our dues are calculated according to your income. If your monthly income is under \$1,000, dues are \$6 a month. If your monthly income is between \$1,000 - \$2,000, dues are \$12 a month. If your monthly income is over \$2,000 a month, dues are \$18 a month.

I affirm that I am a worker, and that I am not an employer

I agree to abide by the IWW constitution

I will study its principles and make myself acquainted with its purposes.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Occupation: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Amount Enclosed: _____

Membership includes a subscription to the Industrial Worker.



Education workers in Hawai'i strike

BY MIKE LONG

Some 12,000 public school teachers and 3,000 University of Hawai'i faculty hit the streets April 5 after months of fruitless negotiations between their respective unions and a recalcitrant state governor, Benjamin Cayetano (D), ended with the sides far apart.

Picket lines went up at 6 a.m. at 256 elementary and secondary schools and all 10 university and community college campuses spread out over the seven islands that make up Hawai'i. Some 185,000 school-age students and about 35,000 of 44,500 UH-system students were without classes. Together, they constitute around 20 percent of the entire state population of 1.2 million. Add in parents and siblings, and some 40 percent of Hawai'i's people are directly affected. This is reportedly the first top-to-bottom public education workers strike in U.S. history.

When the state's high cost of living is factored in, Hawai'i's school teachers are the worst paid in the nation. Their union, HSTA, had sought a 22% raise over four years; Cayetano, the self-described "education governor," had offered roughly 14% – nowhere near enough to attract and retain quality personnel. This is par for the course for a small-minded man who has been untroubled by crumbling buildings, steadily increasing class-size, and a 9% drop in the proportion of the state's budget spent on education during his first six years in office.

Pay for UH faculty puts them at the 20th percentile, and they, too, have the high cost of living here to contend with. Despairing at the situation, many top UH faculty have been

leaving for much higher-paying jobs at mainland universities.

After working without a contract for two years, UHPA, the faculty union, sought a paltry 12 percent pay raise over four years, barely the rate of inflation. Cayetano responded with a 7% offer (and nothing at all for lecturers), massive cuts to healthcare benefits and pensions, and a payroll lag which would have cancelled out the increase. His animosity toward the faculty is well known, fueled among other things by UHPA's endorsement of his Republican opponent two years ago. Now, it's pay-back time.

In a move blatantly intended to set one group of workers against another, Cayetano recently suggested that if anything close to what the two unions are demanding were ever granted, large numbers of other state jobs would have to be cut to pay for it, or alternatively all state workers in other departments would have to be furloughed one day a week. This ruse may yet come back to haunt him. The head of Hawai'i's largest, and traditionally most conservative public sector union, HGEA, which represents white collar clerical staff throughout the system, responded angrily by threatening a walk-out if anything like that were attempted. The winning potential of co-ordinated industrial action by all four of Hawai'i's public sector unions must surely be occurring to many workers throughout

the system by now, and perhaps even to their leaders. It is a pity that the fourth, and in a strike, most crucial, union, UPW, representing blue collar workers of various kinds, is currently weakened by its boss, Gary Rodrigues, having recently been indicted by a federal grand jury on corruption charges (see *IW* April 2000, p. 5).

The atmosphere on both unions' picket lines has been spirited and determined the first two days. 15,000 education workers are very, very angry, and feelings run deep. Over 99 percent of HSTA members voted to authorize their strike, and 91% of UHPA members to authorize theirs. The school teachers say they recognize it could be a long, hard struggle, but that they will stay out as long as it takes.

long as it takes. Polls show they have overwhelming community support.

Even Cayetano says he agrees they deserve a big raise. It is just that there is not enough money to pay for it, he insists, while appropriating close to a billion dollars of public money to fund a massive new convention center and other boondoggle projects to boost the (private) tourist industry. Meanwhile, he warned that teachers, students and parents should prepare for a long strike, and both groups of strikers were told that their health coverage, not just their salaries, will be yanked as long as the job actions last. No negotiations are scheduled at press time.

Global actions target prison operator/caterer

Thousands of students and other activists took to the streets of Paris, London and a dozen cities across the U.S. April 4 to protest the growing involvement of French multinational Sodexho Alliance in the global private prison industry. The protests, which range from outdoor picnic/boycotts to sit-ins, are part of a student-led "Not With Our Money!" campaign against corporations that finance the expansion of prisons-for-profit.

In Paris, activists distributed 2,000 "placemats" describing Sodexho's role in the global private prison industry to Sodexho-operated eateries. At Florida State University, a coalition including groups ranging from Campus Greens to fraternities/sororities to the AFL-CIO organized a 24-hour boycott/picket of all Sodexho Marriott operations on campus.

Hundreds of State University of New York at Binghamton students turned out for a free-food boycott and rally to protest Sodexho's prison investments and anti-union tactics, prompting President Lois DeFleur to cancel office hours and Sodexho Marriott to shut its office for "routine system maintenance."

Since the launch of Not With Our Money! on April 4, 2000, Sodexho Alliance's North American subsidiary, Sodexho Marriott Services, has been the target of protests on more than 50 of the 500 colleges and universities where the company operates dining halls and food courts. At Buffalo State College (NY) and Ithaca College (NY) students have occupied buildings in protest,

Since the launch of the Not With Our Money! campaign, Sodexho Marriott Services has been the target of protests on more than 50 of the 500 colleges and universities where the company operates dining halls and food courts.

deepened its involvement in prisons-for-profit by buying private prison companies in the U.K. and Australia. And Sodexho Marriott is still contributing financially to a right-wing think tank that pushes legislation for longer sentences and more private prisons. Until they take action to address all three issues, we have no choice but to continue the campaign."

Ali Fischer, president of the two-million member U.S. Student Association, explains that the issue resonates with students, because "We've seen children horribly abused in private facilities in Louisiana and South Carolina. We've seen higher education budgets slashed to build unnecessary prisons. We don't want more of our 'dining dollars' to feed this corrupt industry." The campaign has also highlighted Sodexho Marriott Services' record of violating workers' rights. At the University of Massachusetts at Boston students have been demanding that administrators deprivatize the food services in order to stop Sodexho's abuse of workers.

U.S. and Canadian students were recently joined by grassroots allies in Great Britain and France. In London, the Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers has organized a "Sod Off Sodexho" action to protest the

company's acquisition of U.K. Detention Services as well as Sodexho's involvement in a voucher system that exploits refugees. The system has forced some women refugees into prostitution.

Kate Rhee, Director of Prison Moratorium Project, which helped launch the campaign, hopes that students will be able to prevent Sodexho Alliance from expanding into what a company prospectus describes as a 45 billion Euro "potential market" for privatized correctional services. Rhee observes, "Prison privatization is a global crisis, and it will take a global movement to stop it."

Sodexho Alliance is a Paris-based multinational operating contract food and management services, privatized correctional facilities, and other services in 60 countries. Sodexho Marriott Services, which operates as Sodexho's 48%-owned North American subsidiary, generates \$1.2 billion in annual revenues from contracts at over 500 college campuses and also provides institutional food services to public schools, hospitals and corporate cafeterias.

UK privatization

continued from page 1

able city centre land they sat on. So the NHS has redesigned its modernisation programme to attract private money. The £30m scheme to renovate Coventry's two hospitals, for example, was transformed into a £174m plan to knock them both down and build a new one. The NHS will now have to pay the private contractors £36m a year for the next 25 years, forcing massive cutbacks in services.

Even when private companies offer the same services, it's not clear that the savings they make could really be regarded as 'efficiencies.' As Richard Tilt, director of the prison service, remarked in 1996, "the great majority of the cost reduction comes from the payment of much lower wages and poorer conditions of service for staff working in the private sector." What this means is more prison riots, less rehabilitation and more crime when the inmates are released. The costs the service would have carried, in other words, are dumped instead on to society.

Teach CUNY

Some 3,000 faculty, staff and students participated in TEACH CUNY actions March 28 across the City University of New York's 17 campuses. The day was a time of protest but also analysis of more than 25 years of systematic budget cuts by Republican and Democratic state and city administrations.

Since 1975 CUNY has lost \$375 million, more than 30 percent of its budget. During the same period lawmakers have imposed tuition and increased it four times; CUNY community colleges now have the highest tuition in the country. Moreover recent decisions by the conservative Board of Trustees have removed remediation from the senior colleges and a new report recommends that these services be ended at the community colleges as well.

Columbia U TAs go union

Graduate employees at Columbia University have petitioned for a NLRB union representation election. The UAW already represents some 800 clerical workers at the private college. The UAW now seeks to represent some 1,100 teaching assistants, research assistants and graduate students employed as instructors – employees who teach more than half the college's core curriculum.

Pacifica's WBAI fires labor host

BY KEN NASH

When Interim Station Manager Utrice Leid invaded and took over the mike on WBAI's "Building Bridges" March 5th, she took it away from me, Congressman Major Owens and Larry Adams, president of Local 300, National Postal Mailhandlers Union (who never did get to speak).

Owens had just talked about the value of free speech radio and the need to ensure it by democratic management of WBAI by listeners and staff. Leid's hijacking of the show that Monday proved his point more than any amount of words.

Ms. Leid said to me in the studio that day that "Building Bridges is cancelled." [Building Bridges was WBAI's only labor program; WBAI is the New York City affiliate of the "progressive" Pacifica radio network, which has been warring with its staff and listeners in recent years.] This is only the most recent in a long series of similar abuses at WBAI which include the firing and banning of several staff members. The question is who will be next?

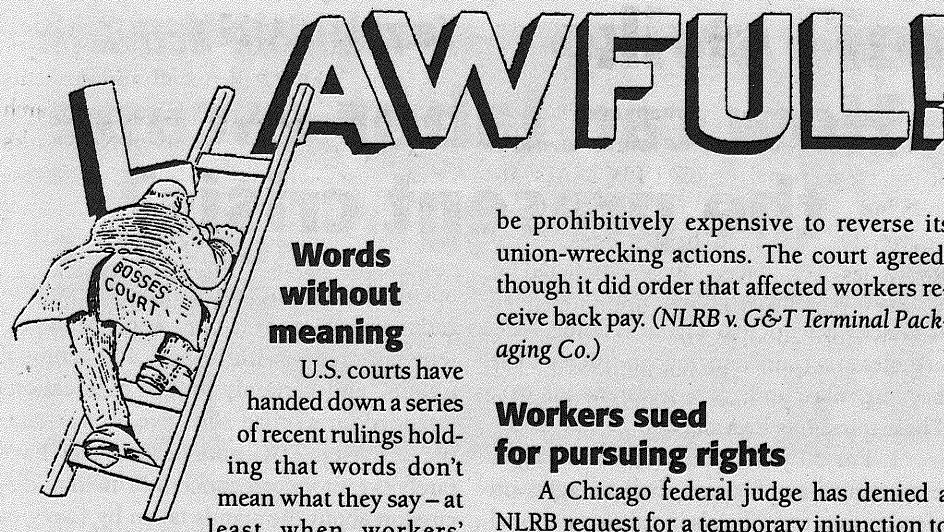
At one point in the studio on March 5th Ms. Leid said to me something to the effect "Do you think you own this air time?" That's the big question. Who owns WBAI or really who should control it? In fact, Rep. Owens had just answered that question – the listeners and workers at WBAI. Not the Pacifica Foundation who only leech off the work of the staff and the money of the listeners. Not me, and certainly not Utrice Leid.

These are not utopian ideas. Our sister station KPFA in San Francisco after a monumental struggle has successfully experimented with staff election of an Interim Station Manager and empowering the community of listeners with elections to their Local Advisory Board. We need nothing less.



may day
greetings to all

HARRY SIITONEN, EAST BAY GMB



Words without meaning

U.S. courts have handed down a series of recent rulings holding that words don't mean what they say – at least when workers' rights are at stake. A sharply divided Ninth Circuit Appeals Court ruled that an arbitrator was within his rights in upholding the immediate firing of a UPS worker for swearing at a human relations director, even though the union contract explicitly restricts such terminations to seven specific infractions. (Otherwise workers must be given written warning and allowed to pursue appeals.) While a two-judge majority conceded that the arbitrator's ruling appeared to violate the contract, they held that it would be inappropriate to intrude into the arbitration process. The third judge dissented, noting that the contract could not be "plausibly interpreted" to permit the termination. "An arbitrator has no authority to ignore the plain language of a collective bargaining agreement," he wrote, especially where, as in the case before the court, its provisions are unambiguous. (*Hawaii Teamsters and Allied Workers Union, Local 996, v. United Parcel Service*) Workers should think twice before allowing arbitrators and judges, whose class consciousness often is too overwhelming to enable them to read simple English, to decide their fate.

Meanwhile, the Sixth Circuit overturned the NLRB March 5, ruling that a Supreme Court decision barring employers from "discriminating" against union activity by prohibiting distribution of union literature while allowing other literature applied only to situations where the boss favored one union over another. (*Sandusky Mall Co. v NLRB*) The mall had had two Carpenters officials arrested in 1992 to stop them from distributing leaflets on mall property.

And the Second Circuit Appeals Court, while agreeing that a Bronx vegetable packing firm that illegally fired 22 workers after refusing to sign a contract it had negotiated with Teamsters Local 27, ruled that the Board exceeded its authority in ordering the company to reinstate the workers. In order to break the union, the company subcontracted its potato-packaging operation and destroyed the machine the workers had operated. On appeal, the company argued that it would

be prohibitively expensive to reverse its union-wrecking actions. The court agreed, though it did order that affected workers receive back pay. (*NLRB v. G&T Terminal Packaging Co.*)

Workers sued for pursuing rights

A Chicago federal judge has denied a NLRB request for a temporary injunction to halt a security guard from enforcing default judgments for \$140,000 against nine former workers who the company sued, claiming they had filed groundless unfair labor practice charges. (*Kinney v Federal Security*) Seventeen security guards were fired in 1995 for participating in a short strike. Although the NLRB ruled that this firing was illegal, the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals overturned the Board. Federal Security then brought suit against the workers, who turned to the NLRB to resolve the dispute.

While the Board was investigating, a state court entered default orders against 11 workers (two of whom later had the orders overturned, the others were obliged to hire attorneys to defend the case), some of whom were apparently never served with the complaint. NLRB Regional Director Elizabeth Kinney said the Board will continue its efforts to overturn the orders. "It's unfortunate that people who sought access to the board are being subjected to this type of suit," she said, especially given the expense of hiring attorneys.

Utah miners lose 8-hour day

Utah Gov. Mike Leavitt has signed legislation repealing prohibitions on working mining workers more than eight hours in a day. A day earlier, he signed legislation barring local governments from passing living wage legislation and barring public employees from authorizing payroll deductions for union political campaigns.

State-financed scabs

New England Health Care Employees Union District 1199 has sued Connecticut Gov. John Rowland for allocating \$5 million in state funds to assist nursing home operators to hire scabs during a one-day strike at 40 nursing homes in the state. More than 4,500 workers joined the one-day strike after employers refused to agree to minimum staffing levels. The governor claims to be neutral in the dispute, but says he will dip into state coffers again to pay for scabs if there is another strike.

Workers Centers help organize immigrant workers

BY JUAN, NYC GARMENT WORKERS' SOLIDARITY CENTER

TRANSLATED BY SIOBHAN MCGRATH

To begin, I should say that I write this from my own experience as an immigrant worker.

Workers centers are developed in an atmosphere of respect for their members. They benefit the working class, since they constitute a new model of organizing the unorganized. They have a particular importance in the immigrant community – a community which for decades now has been written off by unions, NGOs, the governmental agencies, etc., in spite of the fact that immigrants make up the major productive force in basic industries. Combined with the ever-increasing political tendency of scapegoating undocumented workers, this has made it difficult to organize immigrants or include them in the labor movement. The labor movement for its part has been weakened by corruption and poor organizing strategies. Work-

ers' centers are therefore a true alternative for immigrants who lack access to funds and support for their struggle to improve living conditions.

The extreme exploitation of immigrant workers in the US affects all workers. This creates a particular value of the organizing being carried out by workers' centers. It is critical to keep in mind that we need to uphold the principle of helping to bring about true workers' organization. We should not allow anything to needlessly distract from this principle and divide workers. Religious, sports and social activities should be used as a means of developing workers' organizing capacities.

Workers' centers take into account workers' needs, current labor laws, human rights, and workers' own methods of self-defense against the racist attacks mentioned above. These centers assist workers in fighting against such attacks, using tools like English & GED classes, labor history courses and

Bosses have right to pry

A U.S. district judge has ruled that an insurance company acted legally when it retrieved discarded email messages from its file server and then fired an agent in retaliation for his efforts to organize his fellow workers over changes in working conditions. The judge noted that under Pennsylvania law, "Nationwide was free to terminate Fraser's contract for any reason or no reason."

"Right-to-work" in Oklahoma

A bill to call a statewide referendum to make Oklahoma a "right-to-work" state was sent to the House March 28. The measure would prohibit union contracts from requiring workers to join unions or contribute to the costs of union representation. Workers in "right to work for less" states typically earn much lower wages, as unions find it difficult to maintain their strength on the job. Business is pushing for a special election this August in order to make it harder unions to mobilize their members.

Bosses can break law

The Bush administration repealed a regulation issued in the final days of the Clinton administration that would have required the government to consider prospective contractors' record of obeying labor and other laws before awarding contracts. Business groups say being required to follow labor, tax, environmental and other laws is too onerous.

Upsurge in wage-hour suits

Management attorneys are warning of a "huge upsurge" in class action lawsuits against employers who violate federal overtime pay obligations. The U.S. Labor Department estimates that less than 40 percent of employers are in compliance with the Fair Labor Standards Act, and many unions have seized on the pervasive violations during organizing campaigns.

NLRB staff pickets agency

Hundreds of National Labor Relations Board field employees picketed NLRB offices March 28-29 to protest the board's refusal to reach a new contract with the independent union that represents them. Workers have been working without a contract since February 2000. Federal law prohibits them from striking.

The Board is demanding the right to move workers into buildings containing asbestos, to unilaterally cut benefits, and to cut back on the time union representatives are allowed to use for union business. "I find it absolutely ludicrous that the agency I work for and that is supposed to foster collective bargaining does not want to give its employees an honorable contract and working conditions that are modern and progressive," said Bruce Hill, president of the NLRB Union.

movies. These need to be initiated by the working class and our allies.

Let's hope that NGOs, unions and community organizations acknowledge the role of workers and their organizations - rather than using them and the struggles of the working class as a means of promoting their own causes, doing business, or making money. Support for workers' centers needs to begin with a basic respect for workers.

As more workers' centers are formed in New York City, there are new opportunities for cooperation and solidarity. From the 200 diverse workers who viewed and discussed the movie "La Ciudad / The City" in September 2000 to the 600 who marched through Brooklyn's Garment district this February, we have been collaborating in many areas. Most recently, we have called for a mobilization to celebrate May Day and demand workers' rights. Following a rally at Union Square, we will be gathering at 36th Street and 8th Avenue to march through Manhattan's Garment District and join the demonstration for a general amnesty for all immigrants at the IMF building on 44th Street and 2nd Avenue.

New York public workers demand living wage

Thousands of New York City public workers who make little better than minimum wage in the U.S.'s most expensive city are organizing to demand a living wage.

Home health care aides working for \$6.55 an hour, childcare workers making \$7.82 an hour, and more than 100,000 others work for human service nonprofit agencies funded by the city of New York. Their employers hold more than \$3 billion in city contracts to care for many of the city's poorest, most powerless residents – mentally retarded children, the homebound elderly, teens in foster care group homes, parents with AIDS.

Cutbacks in city funding, burgeoning non-profit administrations, and a lack of union organization have resulted in the city and its contractors financing these services on the backs of its lowest-paid workers.

Now activists are pushing a far-reaching living wage ordinance that would force any business that gets contracts, subsidies or tax breaks from the city to pay their workers at least \$10 an hour – a proposal that would cover everyone from the janitors at Columbia University to hot dog salesmen at Yankee Stadium. (\$10 is far from a living wage in New York City, where tiny apartments start at \$1,000 a month.) Already, the bill has the backing of some of the most powerful "progressive" interests in town – ACORN (which routinely denies these rights to its own workers), the Central Labor Council, the Working Families Party, health care workers Local 1199, and corruption-plagued janitors union SEIU Local 32B-J, among others.

Relentless opposition by nonprofits killed a similar ordinance in 1995, which was also opposed by every daily newspaper, major business groups and the mayor. "Why don't we just dust off The Communist Manifesto?" sneered Deputy Mayor Rudy Washington. Nonprofit executives testified to the city council that they many agencies would close their doors rather than pay workers a living wage.

Suri Deitch, a lobbyist for the Human Services Council, a nonprofit trade group, admits that workers "are paid abysmally low wages... You have mothers with families making \$18,000. You have people under the poverty level in these jobs." But that didn't stop her from fighting to preserve those low wages.

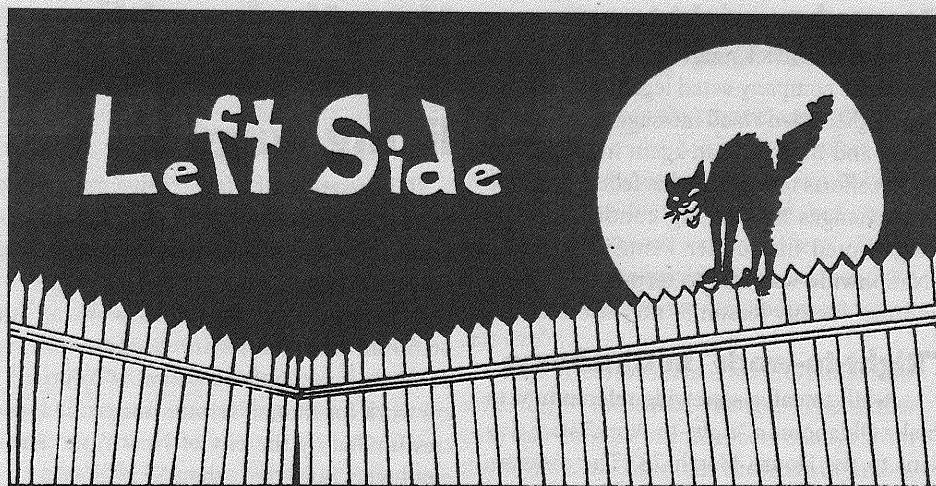
The new legislation would require the city to foot the bill for wage hikes for underpaid human service workers. Even with that provision, few agencies are signing on.

Meanwhile, the campaign could expose the cozy system of city subsidies through provisions requiring any company that gets a sizeable tax break or other subsidy from the city – and all their on-site subcontractors and business partners – to pay at least \$10 an hour. That includes the city's most profitable and prominent firms.

The law would cover the cafeteria line attendant at Lincoln Center's cafeteria, who, after 11 years on the job, makes \$8.80 an hour. It would cover the grill cook at the Metropolitan Opera, a single mother who, on her \$7.75 an hour salary, lives in a homeless shelter. Even the janitors who sweep slips off the floor of the New York Stock Exchange would be covered.

Business groups seem confident they will be able to defeat the bill – or at least make sure that it doesn't cover them. If it does pass, of course, it will put ACORN in a very awkward position, given their determined fight to prevent their own workers from exercising basic labor rights such as the right to organize, to a 40-hour week, to safe working conditions, etc.

The proposed law could also pose difficulties for New York City itself, which compels welfare recipients to work off their grants at rates that fall well short of a living wage.



Another May Day has rolled around, but we wouldn't know it if we were to depend on the mass media. The media is quite adept at sweeping under the rug any spontaneous demonstrations on the part of us ordinary people, who are becoming increasingly impatient with the way things are going. If certain manifestations are too large for the media to ignore, they will do their damnedest to discredit them. When the World Trade Organization was unable to complete their agenda in spite of the preponderance of protection on the part of the forces of law and order, the tube showed pictures of smashed windows in spite of the mass protest being peaceful and orderly.

When a similar meeting was held in Windsor, Ontario, the Canadian border was closed up tighter than a bull's derriere during blow fly season, blocking off sympathetic support from stateside. Although thousands clogged the streets of that city, pictures of crowds in both Windsor and Detroit were to be seen only in left-wing and alternative periodicals. I could fill up this column with numerous other examples.

Due to the manipulation of the media here in Freedomland, May Day was the scene of tanks rolling past the Kremlin, rather than what is recognized around the world as International Workers Day. Such is not known by many of us here in Freedomland.

Your scribe remembers back in 1971 when he and Fellow Worker wide were visiting Greece, her homeland, and were watching a massive May Day parade in the port city of Pireas despite the country being under the junta at that time when gossip substituted for political discussion in the coffee houses. Nevertheless, there were masses of workers marching down the main street, each carrying a red carnation in their hands, accompanied by marching bands playing not military music nor, understandably enough, the Internationale, but the current popular song from a recent Greek movie. The military dictators had recognized that World Labor Day could not be ignored. Greece, like many European cities, had long been the locus of militant struggles by workers who were always striving to better their conditions.

Last year, here in the Windy City, there was a large outpouring of radicals and unionists who put on a massive parade down one of the principal thoroughfares, coming to a rallying point where they were joined by marches from other parts of town, principally from the Spanish-speaking neighborhoods. It was a sight that overwhelmed the heart of yours truly. This year another such observance has been planned, which I am unable to report on as of this writing. Your scribe is on the local May Day planning committee, which consists of a melange of activists from all ideological stripes who, through consensus, are endeavoring to make this year's observances bigger and better than the previous one.

In the face of all the recent depredations that we are being with over the boob tube, what I have just mentioned is, to put it lightly, an encouraging development. It is a shot in the arm after years of occasional marches down the main drag of the Mexican barrio or small groups of radicals gathered around the tomb of the Haymarket Martyrs to see May Day recapturing its classical verve where, instead of having minuscule gatherings of old die-hard reds, we will accomplish some outreach. It behooves us to keep plugging away not only for May Days, but to keep passing the word all year around as the time is getting shorter and shorter.

Bear in mind that those who manipulate us are a damn sight better organized than we are, and for a damn good reason. They have more to lose than we do! While they fully realize more than we do that they are ruining this planet of ours, they may be thinking they can eventually migrate to another planet, leaving the rest of us stuck with the mess they left behind. One of my dilettantish friends who refuses to become involved keeps telling me that all the isms don't work. I ask him, what about capitalism? He replies, Where are all your world-saving ideas getting you? I proceed to inform him of the long history of repression and co-optation of those who oppose their oligarchy. They have all the armies and police forces doing their bidding.

They may be in the saddle, but they are perpetually soiling their trousers lest us chickens on the bottom decide that we are tired of receiving their droppings. On this May Day, let's remember that they need us — we don't need them! — C.C. Redcloud

An open letter to rank-and-file labor activists:

How can labor escape the present crisis?

This is a fraternal letter. We do not wish to attack the work that anyone is doing. Nevertheless, certain nagging questions have become more and more insistent for us... These questions include:

1. For 30 years reformers in the labour movement have focused their energies on electing new top officials in existing national unions. Has this strategy produced the results for which we hoped? Can this strategy ever be expected to lead to a decisive break with the existing economic system? Isn't what we have been doing just a warmed-over Social Democratic strategy that the 20th century again and again proved to be a blind alley?

2. Now that shutdowns and layoffs have once again become the order of the day, isn't it time to recognize that existing unions and union reform movements in both the United States and Canada have no answers whatever to the problems of shutdowns? Whatever organizing success is recorded at workplaces corporate globalization, we must build international working-class solidarity. Surely we all long for the day when GM workers in Mexico, Ohio and Ontario, will strike together on behalf of common contract demands.

that cannot move (government offices, hospitals, etc.), these gains are more than offset by job losses in the manufacturing sector.

Yet union representatives go on mouth-
ing the same tired rhetoric that failed com-
pletely 20 years ago: foreign producers are
“dumping,” plants in other countries are
“subsidized,” we need to help “our” com-
pany... Doesn’t the labor left need to say that
as long as we continue to accept manage-
ment prerogative and no-strike clauses in our
contracts, the companies can continue to do
what they are doing?

We think that the labor movement at a minimum should aggressively explore employee buyouts and the use of eminent domain. Indeed, experiences in Youngstown in several Canadian workplaces, at the Coca-Cola plant in Guatemala, and elsewhere, suggests that we must be prepared to initiate and support factory occupations protesting shutdown decisions. Like the workers at the Daewoo auto plants in South Korea, where private owners abandon plants that can still be productive we should demand worker or community ownership.

3. In those unions where reform movements have succeeded in electing new national officers, have we not failed in creating a critical left opposition to remind these leaders of their election promises and to hold them accountable to the rank and file?

In the Teamsters, for example, Ron Carey took part in the decision early in 1997 to order striking newspaper workers in Detroit back to work without giving them a chance to vote on the proposal... Although election of stewards and BAs has been a basic principle of Teamsters for a Democratic Union since it was founded a quarter century ago, Tom Leedham, the current reform candidate for president of the Teamsters, said to one of the authors of this Open Letter that he thought there were a "lot of good arguments" for appointing rather than electing staff representatives...

On Feb. 8, Leedham denounced current Teamsters president Hoffa for failing to agitate more vigorously to prevent Mexican truckers from hauling goods throughout the United States. (More about this below)

Committed activists can differ in good faith about such issues. But they should be

openly debated, not only within the organizations of the labor left but also – to the extent possible – within local and national unions, and certainly within publications intended for a broad audience of rank-and-file activists. TDU and *Labor Notes* have rarely if ever voiced concern or invited discussion about the stands taken by Carey or Leedham on these issues.

It is one thing to support a "progressive" individual for national office. It is something quite different to abandon the freedom to criticize. The current strategy of many friends of labor seems to require rank-and-file workers to check their brains at the door. ...
to combat

In order to combat transnational corporations and their strategy of globalization, we must build international working-class solidarity. Surely we all long for the day when GM workers in Mexico, Lordstown and St. Catherine's, Ontario, will strike together on behalf of common contract demands.

The protest at the World Trade Organization meeting in Seattle

represented a huge first step. However, we have to recognize that the Steelworkers union was in Seattle to keep imported steel out of the United States (no matter what happened to steelworkers in Brazil or Korea) and the Teamsters union was there to keep Mexican truck drivers from crossing the border. Many rank-and-file members of these and other unions had an exhilarating experience captured in the phrase "Teamsters and sea turtles together at last." Their unions, however, pursued projects that – despite appearances – had nothing to do with international working-class solidarity.

This issue presents itself again in connection with the recent decision of an arbitration body that Mexican trucks must be permitted to haul throughout the United States. Tom Leedham blamed Hoffa for failing to be an effective protectionist:

"Before Hoffa, our union organized to stop cross-border trucking – building alliances with communities around safety concerns on our roads, building rallies, placing real pressure on politicians. Hoffa's idea of political pressure is a photo opportunity with George W. Bush. Even though Bush told Hoffa before the election that he intended to open the border to Mexican trucks, Hoffa failed to organize around the issue..."

"Whether the cross-border agreement is implemented in stages or all at once, the damage is already done. Large Teamster employers like Roadway Express are already announcing the opening of new terminals in Mexico..."

A longtime rank-and-file Teamster activist puts the case for Leedham's position this way: "Are we to let Mexican companies get away with driving down the best conditions so Mexican drivers will never enjoy them and U.S. drivers will lose them? Mexican drivers do not fill out logs and their hours of service are not limited... They are not protected from the companies when they refuse to drive an unsafe truck. Not to mention the wages and job conditions disparity issue. Of course, not doing more to help Mexican workers and their unions achieve these conditions is where U.S. unions have failed. Finally, I am very concerned about my family and me being on the highway with an overworked driver at the wheel of an unsafe truck. So





Detroit 1997: Thousands were mobilized, but only after the newspaper strike was lost.

until Mexican companies are forced to abide by standards U.S. workers have fought for decades to achieve, it does not seem reactionary or anti-labor to say no Mexican trucks hauling goods in the U.S."

We all agree that Mexican trucks must be subject to the same inspection that the Dept. of Transportation and state agencies require of other trucks. But we are deeply uneasy about the position that Mexican trucks should be banned from hauling across the border. How does this square with the new AFL-CIO position that illegal immigrants from Mexico who work in the United States should now be legalized? A hundred years ago AFL president Samuel Gompers argued that Chinese immigrants should not be allowed into the United States because they were willing to work for wages that no worker in the United States would accept, and the Chinese and other immigrants from unacceptable countries brought disease (a threat to "safety") into the country. How does a ban on Mexican trucks differ from Samuel Gompers' opposition to Chinese immigration?

Many if not most trucks on highways in the United States are unsafe, no matter who is driving them. Under pressure from the employers, drivers routinely haul overweight loads and falsify their logs so as to drive when they are exhausted. ... It is a shame to have the candidates for president of the Teamsters union competing as to who fights the hardest to keep Mexican fellow workers out of the United States.

It is easier to be critical than to be positive. Alternatives to the current strategy of seeking to elect top national union leaders will have to be developed in practice. We in the Workers' Solidarity Club of Youngstown have developed the following ideas over 20 years of struggle and experiment.

Why is it that national trade unions will never be able to play a leading role in our movement to get rid of capitalism and substitute something better for it? Because national trade unions are irrevocably linked to capitalism. Their historic project is reform, not revolution, their nature is to try to make capitalism livable.

It is tempting to suppose that the evils of bureaucratic business unionism in North America have been avoided by more radical, socially minded union movements in South Korea or Brazil or South Africa. But these pastures may be no greener than our own. When Volkswagen demanded the "flexibility" to remain "competitive" in a global economy – continuous production, compulsory overtime, 12-hour shifts and 70-hour workweeks, etc. – the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa agreed without giving workers an opportunity to vote on them. New shop stewards were elected in protest, and promptly suspended. Thousands of workers wildcatted, forming a crisis committee made up of representatives from nine local plants, but were ultimately defeated by the combined weight of the company, the labor movement and the government.

In contrast to the practice of national, bureaucratic, top-down trade unions, we champion the idea of self-activity. The first principle of a resistance movement against globalization must be not to concentrate on campaigns for national union office, any more than we make campaigns for national political office our first priority. Like the Zapatistas, we should influence national

campaigns by our non-electoral self-activity at the base.

Local union activists over and over again find themselves choosing between two ways of reaching out to the larger labor movement. One way is to align yourself with national union headquarters. The other path takes its inspiration from the astonishing recreation from below throughout the past 130 years of ad hoc central labor bodies: the Paris Commune of 1871; local workers' councils known as "soviets" in Russia in 1905 and 1917; the Italian factory committees of the early 1920s; solidarity unions in Toledo, Minneapolis, San Francisco and elsewhere in the States in the early 1930s; workers' councils in Hungary in 1956 and Poland in 1980-81; and, lest we forget, France in the fall of 1995, when a working class, the trade union density of which is as low as in the United States, mobilized itself through institutions outside the trade union movement, repeatedly took to the streets, and forced the government to abandon a plan for social retrenchment at the expense of the workers.

These were all horizontal gatherings of all kinds of workers in a given locality, who then formed regional and national networks with similar bodies elsewhere. The left in several Latin American countries has seen the need to begin the building of a new society locally, from below. We must find ways to do likewise.

The *Impact* editorial board, together with Jim Brophy, Marty Glaberman, Eric O'Neill and Peter Rachleff

Excerpted from the April 2001 issue of *Impact*. For a copy of the entire article please send \$2 to PO Box 2125, Youngstown OH 44504 or email salynd@aol.com.

Indonesian auto workers strike

Despite a brutal attack March 29 that left one worker dead and 11 injured, workers at the Indonesian car upholstery producer PT Kadera AR in the Pulogadung industrial estate in East Jakarta said they would continue their strike until the company's management met their demands.

"I have been working for the company for nine years, but I only receive Rp 374,000 (US\$37.40) per month," one of the workers, Marijo, 38, told The Jakarta Post while visiting an injured fellow worker at the hospital.

"Although it is hard to find a job now, we will better off leaving the company if the management keeps ignoring our demands. We have even lowered our demand for a 100 percent salary increase to 75 percent," another worker, Djoko, added.

The striking workers have made four demands: an increase in salary, revocation of the suspensions of two employees, the granting of permanent employee status for workers who have been with the company for over 18 months, and the dismissal of the company's vice president, Rulichi Sujatim.

The workers, who have been camped inside the factory grounds since the strike began March 19, were asleep when some 500 unidentified people, armed with machetes, swords and homemade bombs, arrived in seven buses and attacked the workers.

One worker, Kimun Effendi, died from wounds caused by a homemade explosive thrown at the striking workers during the attack. Three other workers who suffered

Anti-corporate activists arrested in FTAA protests

Police arrested 87 anti-globalization activists during a protest in front of the Foreign Affairs building in Ottawa April 2.

Demonstrators were arrested after they came forward in pairs to read statements out loud, before climbing over barricades to sit on the building's grounds. One by one they were dragged away by police.

Demonstrators want the government to release the text of the proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas agreement in advance of an international summit in Quebec City.

In San Francisco activists took over the Pacific Stock Exchange April 3, demanding that the transnational corporations who do business there release the FTAA text. (While the text of this trade policy agreement that will adversely affect billions of lives, indigenous cultures and natural resources across the Western Hemisphere is being withheld from the public, hundreds of corporations have access to the negotiations and supporting documents.)

Some 50 protesters gathered in front of the Bank of America building at 7:30 a.m. After efforts to revive the bank's cold heart with adrenaline and electric shock failed, the growing crowd marched on the stock exchange where they found green-clad Robin Hood and others inside, with anti-FTAA banners unfurled.

Police locked the doors to the exchange, attacked demonstrators, and made 11 arrests.

Finance Ministers protested

Police and demonstrators clashed in Toronto April 3 in a sort of 'dress rehearsal' for the upcoming FTAA summit in Quebec City for the finance ministers of the member countries and hundreds of cops from half a dozen different forces.

About a thousand people marched on the Four Seasons Hotel where the 34 villains were meeting, quickly running into barricades closing off roads a block away from the hotel. As the marchers approached, hundreds of cops in full riot gear moved into place behind the barriers. The previous day, Toronto Police chief Julian Fantino had called a press conference to announce a 'zero-tolerance' approach towards any protesters

who engaged in 'unlawful activity' (of course nothing was said by the chief about the possible behavior of the cops under his command). An estimated 700 police from half a dozen forces – Toronto, Peel and Durham Regions, Barrie, Ontario Provincial Police and RCMP – were present. Several cops stood on a scaffold with gas and rubber bullet launchers trained on the crowd throughout the demonstration.

As it turned out, things remained generally peaceful, despite the obvious sabre-rattling by the police. One man was dragged over the barricades and arrested – the cops are claiming he attempted to breach the barrier, but there's nothing to suggest this was the case. (According to one witness, the arrestee was actually a homeless man who frequented that neighborhood, who had been verbally questioning the cops' behavior towards homeless people).

This event was another clear manifestation of the police-state tactics that are becoming increasingly popular. Last October, police attacked a peaceful crowd outside the Tory policy convention in downtown Toronto, arresting half a dozen and injuring several others. The following morning, riot cops doing a 'sweep-and-clear' of a local park attacked and arrested a student activist involved in an ongoing anti-homelessness protest. Last June, Toronto cops rioted outside the Ontario legislature, injuring and arresting dozens of anti-poverty demonstrators. (The arrests continued post-event for months afterward). In the recent past, demonstrators outside the APEC summit, a Liberal Party fundraiser in Vancouver and on Parliament Hill have been clubbed and pepper-sprayed by the RCMP.

The security forces in Quebec City are expected to include upwards of 6,000 cops from the RCMP, Sureté du Québec and local municipal forces, along with several hundred army troops.

Sweatshops, unions & Fortress Europe

Although the European bosses do not want to allow immigrants from North Africa to enter Europe (it is estimated that several hundred drowned trying to enter Spain in 1998) they do want access to these same people as cheap labour.

The EU is continuing their exploitation through creating a special trade zone of some of the North African countries similar to the free trade zones North America has created in Mexico. In Ireland this has been most visible with Fruit of the Loom closing plants in the northwest of Ireland and opening new plants in Morocco where workers are paid one-seventh of what the (low-paid) Irish workers were paid.

Morocco is a monarchy, infamous for jailing political prisoners in an underground jail in the desert. As might be expected, one of the services provided for the European bosses is the suppression of trade unions. An International Confederation of Free Trade Unions report notes that "21 Moroccan trade unionists were imprisoned in 1999 for trade union activities, and that they were tortured during their detention."

ICFTU also discussed a dispute where "when a trade union was set up in November of last year at a subsidiary of the Irish [sic] Fruit of the Loom group in the town of Sale – a factory employing over 1,200 workers – a whole arsenal of anti-union tactics was unleashed: the recruitment of militiamen to intimidate participants at the union assembly, the dismissal of eight leaders elected by the grassroots the governor ... sided with the Fruit of the Loom management, stating bluntly that he didn't want any unions in his prefecture."

from Workers Solidarity

Carpenters leave AFL-CIO

continued from page 1

eral organizing drives among unorganized construction workers not represented by other unions, such as drywall hangers, and begun seeking contracts where they would have exclusive representation rights over major projects. The Carpenters even offer electrician and other training to members, AFL-CIO officials complain, and recently opened a \$22 million training center in Las Vegas to expand these efforts.

Recently, the Carpenters have repeatedly expressed interest in building a "wall-to-wall union," where all construction workers on a job would have common union representation and would work across craft lines in order to increase the competitiveness of the union sector. The recently completed subway spur in Los Angeles was built entirely with carpenters, even though relatively little of the work lies within their traditional jurisdiction. However, the Carpenters intend to focus on concrete construction, drywall, doors, finishing and floors, varying the exact mix "by what makes sense for the marketplace in a given geographic area," according to McCarron. This approach will inevitably bring the Carpenters into conflict with the Laborers, the only construction union with cheaper wages, and the Painters (who have aspirations of their own, embodied in their new "One Union" slogan).

McCarron's identification with the employers runs deep. He sits on the board of directors of Perini Construction and has diverted millions of dollars of Carpenters' pension funds into developments (losing millions of dollars in the process). In a March 23 address to the National Erectors Assn. convention in Hawaii, McCarron told contractors: "You need the freedom to assign the work based on what makes sense, what makes all of us competitive on the job. If there's a dispute, let the owner settle it. It's his money and his job. Surely, we've learned that much."

"While industry was demanding more for its construction dollar," McCarron said,

"our answer was to shut down your job while we argued over whether an iron worker or a millwright did your rigging. We not only refused to help solve the problem, but we refused to admit there was a problem... We're serious about reorganizing the industry," he concluded. "We're serious about customer service."

McCarron says this is an inevitable consequence of industrial change. "The industries that employ our members change from day to day... We have restructured our union, reorganized it, and it's time to move forward."

One Member, No Vote

As part of this restructuring, the UBC has stripped its locals of much of their power and transferred it to 65 regional councils whose officers are not elected by the membership and are headed by McCarron appointees. This restructuring has touched off bitter struggles within the union, but dissidents have thus far been unable to make their voice heard on more than a local level. The Carpenters convention, which elects International officers, is open to only a handful of working carpenters, the delegates are overwhelmingly on the International payroll, either directly or through the Councils.

For the last two years "One Member, One Vote" signs have sprouted at construction sites around the country, demanding a return to elected officers. On March 29 UBC Local 33 Regional Council Rep. Thomas Harrington was in federal court in Boston. Harrington and other working carpenters have sued the U.S. Labor Department in an effort to compel it to require the direct election of the New England Regional Council of Carpenters by union members. The government has accepted the Carpenters' argument that the councils are not locals, and so are not required to allow members to elect their officers. The dissidents maintain that the councils are locals in everything but name, with the power to negotiate and enforce contracts. Some 3,800 carpenters signed petitions in 1998 protesting the reor-

ganization, but were ignored and have no way under the new structure to make their wishes felt in "their" union.

The decision to withdraw from the AFL-CIO was similarly taken without any consultation with rank and file.

While construction trades unions seem reluctant to expel the Carpenters from building trades councils, if McCarron goes ahead with his plan to provide contractors with a "wall-to-wall" work force, the other construction crafts will have little choice but to fight back.

By transforming the Carpenters union into a "wall-to-wall" organization, through which contractors could be assured of lining up the services of ironworkers, bricklayers, laborers, plumbers and other trades for a complete construction job, McCarron hopes to bring trade unionism into the 20th century and to reverse the unions' declining share of new construction work. He has won over a number of contractors who see "wall-to-wall" as a more efficient and less costly way of doing business. McCarron will need to attract tens of thousands of non-union workers in all crafts in order to make this possible.

Union dissidents deride this as a scheme to transform the union into a "Labor Ready" service, essentially a temp agency providing contractors with a steady source of cheap, flexible labor. This criticism, however, ignores the fact that most construction trades unions long ago accepted this role, largely abandoning efforts to organize nonunion sectors of the industry in favor of dispatching their members to work by the job in a steadily declining "union" sector.

Mike Orrfelt, editor of "Hard Hat," a rank-and-file construction workers' publication, said: "I think this will lead to a war in

the building trades. And I certainly hope that it doesn't make construction job sites even more dangerous places to work. I also hope the contractors won't try to drag down wages."

McCarron hopes that the increased "flexibility" his scheme promises employers will be enough to attract them into exclusive agreements. However, other construction unions are sure to respond with jurisdictional strikes and picketing, and are likely to offer to take on the Carpenters' traditional work. Most observers believe this would inevitably lead to the unions underbidding each other to secure new

work, and to strong pressure from union officials on rank-and-filers not to complain about working conditions or enforce work rules lest such disputes offer an entry for another union to grab the work.

The Carpenters' withdrawal from the AFL-CIO is a symptom of the crisis facing craft unionism in particular, and business unionism more generally. Unable or unwilling to organize a real fight against the bosses, and hamstrung by their belief that workers and employers share common interests, the business unionists are flailing about, trying to halt their slide into oblivion.

But while the Carpenters' recent interest in "wall-to-wall" unionism might on the surface bear a passing resemblance to industrial unionism, it is devoid of the substance. True industrial unionism organizes workers to unite them for the struggle against the employing class, relies on direct action and solidarity, and is controlled by the members themselves. What McCarron has on offer is a warmed-over craft unionism, perhaps suited to the industrial conditions prevailing in 1901 but which has nothing to offer to wage slaves today.

or no reason, are less likely to fight back.

The only way to reverse this downward spiral is to bring a measure of job security to our industry. Members will be able to stand up for themselves if they know that the union's got their back.

We also need a better system of enforcing the payment of benefits. If contractors do not pay benefit stamps in a reasonable amount of time, all of that contractor's jobs should be shut down, and all of their carpenters removed. No exceptions, no excuses, no extensions, no pay equals no work.

And we need a much stronger shop steward system to enforce the contract on the ground. Beyond the contract, we also need to deal with the non-union contractors and the "union" contractors who pay cash. It's pointless to waste time and money filing NLRB petitions one contractor at a time, or suing delinquent contractors one at a time. Instead, we need to organize strikes against entire sectors of the industry.

But the union leaders are not going to go down this road. They believe in cooperation with the contractor, not in struggling for the rights of carpenters. So, we have to transform the union. We need to get rid of the old approach to unions, which involved officers and BAs making all the decisions, with minimal input from the rank and file members on the job sites.

Instead, we need a union whose leaders would be delegates, temporarily released from working to administer the union on behalf of the members, and returning to the tools after a 3-year non-relectable term.

Negotiations should be held in public, so members can attend the bargaining sessions. When an agreement is reached, the entire text should be mailed to the members, and they should be given 10 business days

to read it. No agreement should go into effect unless 50% of the members affected vote to ratify it.

These suggestions are a far cry from the way our union is currently run. But, for rank and file union carpenters, and the majority of the men and women in this trade who are unorganized, I believe that this plan would be in our best interests. We have to change the union, from business unionism over to revolutionary unionism, or the union, and our standard of living, are going to keep declining. Be union, work safe.

(This has been edited from a much longer text, which can be found at <http://www.geocities.com/gangbox/>)

Ohio amusement park squashes Plumbers union

Union plumbers who had been locked out at Cedar Point amusement park in Sandusky, Ohio, for two weeks surrendered April 4, approving a new contract allowing management to hire non-union workers.

Eight members of Plumbers and Steamfitters Local 42 were locked out March 22 after rejecting the contract. When they set up picket lines, 130 members of other unions honored it, slowing efforts to prepare the park for its May 6 opening. Repairs were underway on several rides at the time.

After the bosses brought in non-union ride repair workers from other amusement parks owned by Cedar Fair, including Knott's Berry Farm in California, Dorney Park in Pennsylvania, and Valley Fair in Minnesota, the plumbers took down their picket line. Four other unions then returned to work, leaving the plumbers out on their own.

The company did agree to give "preference" to union plumbers for the first two years of the three-year contract.

Bargaining behind closed doors

BY GREGORY A. BUTLER

Fifteen of the almost two dozen collective bargaining agreements that govern New York union carpenters expire June 30, and contract talks have begun "informally" between the NY District Council of Carpenters and some of the employers associations.

The big question is, what can we expect from this agreement? How strong are we, and how much bargaining power do we have, considering that we are going into a recession?

Supposedly, our council has gotten stronger in the last few months, despite the labor racketeering indictment of our EST. Our officers claim that our DC's picketing program and "electioneering" [their words, not mine] for the Democratic Party has brought the NYDCofC tremendous "clout."

But, despite this supposed strength, Vice President Gene Maiello says that "we must be willing to deliver some incentives to our signatory employers." There have been proposals from the organizing department for a 30% lower scale for HUD low income apartment renovation, and the scaffold contractors actually got a rate 30% lower than timberman scale. Who knows what other "incentives" they are talking about behind closed doors? Certainly not NY's 18,800 rank and file carpenters.

Bottom line, we have a situation where all of the low income apartment renovation work in Harlem, the Bronx and Brooklyn, financed by HUD and the city, is done by non-union general contractors who pay rock bottom wages. Instead of trying to organize a strike on these jobs, the organizing department offered contractors a substandard agreement, 30% less than carpenter scale. Of course, even a 30% discount would be over

\$20 an hour. The contractors pay far less than that now, and the DC had no plans to make them pay more by organizing a strike. So that plan died on the vine.

In less than 100 days, we will have new agreements. The question is, what type of agreements should we have, and what kind of changes are we going to need to make in our union to get them?

The root of our problems is the "business unionism" that has dominated our union for the last 100 years. The union is run by autocratic BAs and officers who collaborate with contractors, as opposed to fighting for the members' rights on the job.

Now our General Office is trying to save business unionism by imposing a centralized dictatorship over the union, and totally subordinating our union to the contractors. We need to reorganize the union so it fights for the rank and file carpenter.

We need a 90/10 hiring hall. The contractors should be allowed to pick a maximum of 50% of their first 10 carpenters, thereafter a minimum of 90% of the carpenters should come from the hall. If a contractor wants to fire a carpenter for cause, he/she should have to go to the union, and present evidence. The employee should be kept on the payroll until and unless the termination is upheld by the union.

Basically, we need to take control of hiring from the contractors. The request system has created a situation where carpenters have begged for employment as isolated individuals. This has led to some contractors making members work for cash, and has led to a host of other abuses on the job sites, for the simple reason that carpenters who know they can be fired on the spot, for any reason

Time is money, steal some today...

BY MIKE BALLARD

Overtime – unpaid or otherwise, it's just another way we give our masters our daily lives and forgive them the bread they take from our labor. We praying folk know the value of forgiveness. After all, we're all in the same boat, right?

And this ship is "gaw'n up to hebbin," if we're real good. We do the engine maintenance; the cleaning, the endless cleaning; we look out on blue waters for dangerous shoals. In essence, we do the work, provide the goods and services and our employers pay us for what our skills are worth in the labor market. All's right with the world, right?

"Straight on ahead, Jack, we'll make port by dawn at this rate. Forget the overtime pay," says the Captain. (Especially, as he'll get to pocket the difference and make a good show for the stockholders, the major ones anyway. They're the only ones who count.)

Only 4% of you would voluntarily choose to stay in the jobs you have – if you have one. Fifty-six percent of you Australians are working overtime and not getting compensated for it. Most of you are probably not making over Aus \$94,000 a year either. The fat cats collect most of the wealth the rest of us make for them. Check out the Australian Bureau of Statistics, mate. Workers making less than \$15,000 a year are taking in 1.8% of the total income distributed in this "egalitarian" state. Those making more than \$94,000 per annum are raking in 26.8% of it. And the situation is only getting worse. Twenty years ago, they were taking under 25%.

Why?

Do you think that you're infecting the culture with random acts of kindness and senseless acts of beauty?

Think again, mate.

Is it because "mankind" is generous by nature? The historical evidence would seem to suggest that our generosity takes a back seat to our greed. Only at Christmas time and certain other ritually prescribed sale days of the fiscal year, do we seem to be overtly generous creatures.

Ok, then why are you giving away so much of your time to your employers? Do you want to bring back chattel slavery?

Kuk Dong workers establish independent union

Members of the independent worker coalition at the Kuk Dong factory in Atlixco, Mexico, gathered March 18 to meet the legal requirements for forming an independent union. Kuk Dong is a factory that produces for, among others, Nike, Reebok, and many U.S. colleges and universities.

The drive for an independent union at Kuk Dong began in January 2001 as 800 of the factory's then 900 workers went on strike in protest of the unfair firings of five workers. Three months later, independent union supporters met and adopted statutes, elected leadership, and met the legal requirements for the formation of an independent union.

Due to continued hostility towards the independent union, both inside and outside the plant (mainly at the hands of the conservative government affiliated union, the FROC-CROC – the union from which SITEKIM is struggling to win bargaining rights), workers feared reprisals at the meeting. However, although the FROC-CROC did videotape workers entering the meeting, there were no acts of violence.

The newly elected leaders are beginning to take on the role of representing their co-workers, investigating grievances and meeting with management on their behalf. A large majority of the workers in the factory are united in their support of SITEKIM.

In response to strong international pressure, Nike's Corporate Responsibility Vice President wrote Kuk Dong, asking for reinstatement of the original five fired workers, reinstatement of all workers who wish to return with their previous seniority (address-

Are you, in short, daft?

Come on now. You know why it is. You're afraid. You salute the flag; pay homage to the queen then pay your taxes and vote for the pre-selected candidate of your choice in this free country. But freedom on the job...

You're not so free after all, are you?

Do your overseers think that you're free?

"Let's screw them out of a few more hours of their lives, worthless scum."

You simply must get up on time, in order to eat breakfast in time in order to be on time for your Captain. Your ship awaits. You wouldn't want to be "missing a movement" now, would you?

"Reporting for duty, Captain!"

"Good that you're not late, Rogers. We've got some important rubbish to get out today." (Yes, Virginia, this could be said in Cuba and North Korea, as well. Just change the bosses' uniforms.)

Notice the "We." It's "We," until it comes time for the actual work. Admit it. You do the work. Of course, you're paid what you're worth, right?

"Oh, stuff those old fuddy-duddies and their 40-hour work week. We're beyond those dinosaurs."

Sure and there's a bridge for sale in Sydney that I could perhaps interest you in. The "Australia Institute" estimates that 277 million overtime hours were worked during the past two years. If you don't think that the unpaid time didn't contribute to the pocketbooks of the people who own and the people they pay to be your wage-slave drivers, rather than those who actually operate the companies in which this took place; you're only confirming that age-old maxim of P.T. Barnum: "There's a sucker born every minute." Scams need suckers.

Just what does make Sammy Sucker run?

ing the problem of returning workers being treated as new workers), and publicizing the fact that the company dropped the charges against workers and supporters involved in the strike at the beginning of the year.

On March 14th, Verité, an independent monitor hired by Nike to review the Kuk Dong case, released its findings and recommendations that revealed many code and Mexican law violations at the factory. These findings mainly corroborated the findings of the Worker Rights Consortium and the International Labor Rights Fund who issued separate reports at the end of January. This included the finding that most workers are unhappy with FROC-CROC representation and that a union election should be by a secret ballot vote.

However, while significant gains have been made, the climate in the Kuk Dong factory is still hostile towards independent union organizing. While Nike claims that all the workers who wish to return are back in the factory, organizers feel many more wish to return. Also, it seems not all workers have received the seniority they once enjoyed. Workers report that the "neutral" training in labor rights sponsored by Nike was facilitated by a trainer who repeatedly endorsed the FROC-CROC.

Kuk Dong continues to give the FROC-CROC access to company facilities (such as the public announcement system) during working hours. An independent union leader has reported that a member of the FROC-CROC drives around her house even though he does not live in her hometown and has told her that he was "guarding the chicks so that they would not step out of the fence."

Fear, baby; it's fear and it's got you by the balls or some other sensitive genital organ. Admit it. It's primal; like the times when you were a kid and really believed that monsters lurked under your bed.

In Australia, 277 million overtime hours were worked during the past two years. If you don't think that the unpaid time didn't contribute to the pocketbooks of the people who own, rather than those who actually operate the companies in which this took place; you're only confirming that age-old maxim: "There's a sucker born every minute."

or, if not that, at least possibly winning the Lotto. Sammy Sucker scratches another losing ticket – one born every minute, baby.

Why must we be on time to sell our time and our skills in order to buy this, our daily bread and then work unpaid overtime to boot?

Because, we're the wage-slaves and we're afraid to speak truth to the powers over us. We're afraid because we feel alone; weak; isolated. So, we go home; watch TV and wait for the cycle of abuse to begin again. We're enablers, we are.

According to an editorial in the *West Australian* dated December 27, "The problem of the inequitable distribution of work is by no means new. In the 1932 essay, 'In Praise of Idleness,' Bertrand Russell argued that modern production methods had raised the possibility of ease and security for all. Instead there was overwork for some and starvation for others."

Russell made the point that the *work day could be reduced to four hours* back then through the use of labour saving machinery. If that was true then, the editors of "Swill & Squeal" say that it is even truer today. After all, hasn't productivity per worker climbed many times over since 1932? Of course, it has. Modern scientific and technological advances in machinery have made that an indisputable fact. What Russell didn't anticipate was the rapacious need on the part of our captains, the captains of that ship we're all on together, the Good Ship Economy, to continue to expand production of ever more

useless junk for sale with a view to profit and the ad industry's desire to create the need for this junk, to firmly implant it in our brains on a nightly TV basis. Eyeball contact; the path of least resistance to the brain stem. The "slime's coming out of your TV set," Matey. Instead of using labour saving machinery to save us the necessary drudge time and increase our leisure, our time and lives continue to be squandered, commodified, along with our most precious natural resources the air we breathe; the water we drink and the food we eat. Whether we want to take responsibility for it or not, we make our own beds. We lie in them.

Nurses fight overtime

Having recently seceded from the American Nurses Association in order to build a more militant union, Massachusetts nurses are now fighting to regain the 8-hour day. In recent years, health care industry managers have slashed staffing levels, resulting in overcrowded emergency rooms, medical errors, declining quality of care and high turnover.

An ANA survey found that 75% of nurses believe the quality of care at the facility employing them has declined in the last two years, 40% said they would not feel comfortable having a family member cared for there.

Nurses across the country are pressing for a limit of no more than five patients per nurse, about half the levels currently prevailing. They are also pushing for an end to mandatory overtime policies that leave many nurses working 16 hours straight.

Nurses at University of Massachusetts Memorial hospital recently won a new contract limiting nurses' work days to no more than 12 hours. Nurses will be able to be assigned mandatory overtime no more than eight times a year, and may refuse to work if they feel too tired or sick.

Nurses are also pushing for legislation to address the issue. The MNA's Sandy Ellis, a leader of the landmark St. Vincent Hospital nurses' 49-day strike over the issue, recently told Congress: "The use of mandatory overtime for nurses has caused a public health crisis in this country. It is unconscionable that, in this healthcare environment when nurses must care for more patients and hospitalized patients are sicker than ever before, it is demanded we work forced 12, 14, and even 16-hour shifts. Would any person want his own mother or child cared for by a bleary-eyed, exhausted nurse who is forced to be at work against her will?"

"Too often, our health care system is based on the bottom line, on profits rather than patients. Health care companies can save money by forcing people to work brutal hours."

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Chaplin hanging out with Chief Leschi in Tacoma

BY ARTHUR J. MILLER

With a little time on my hands, and nothing better to do, I went over to the Washington State History Museum here in Tacoma. I had heard that they had an exhibit on one-time Wobbly Ralph Chaplin, so I thought I would see how "history" records a guy who was once one hell of a man, and wrote "Solidarity Forever."

"In our hands is placed a power greater than their hoarded gold,
Greater than the might of armies,
Magnified a thousand-fold.
We can bring to birth the new world
From the ashes of the old,
For the Union makes us strong.
Solidarity Forever!"

The exhibit was small and it had as much to do with Chaplin's later life when he was a right-wing Republican as it did about his days as a Wobbly. The only thing that caught my eye was an old publication of an epic poem Chaplin wrote about Chief Leschi. Next to the publication was a picture of Chief Leschi and a few words saying that Chaplin was inspired by him. Of course the words of the poem were not out to be read and I had to hold back my desire to take the publication off the wall and open it up and read it.

Here in the Northwest, few outside of the native communities know much about the real history of this land. The more "enlightened" will tell you that Chief Leschi is the name of a school run by the Puyallup Nation. But who was he? Few of them could give you any answer to that question.

Among the "enlightened" ones there are those who know of Chief Sealth of the Duwamish and the famous speech that he is reported having given (though there are some who say the famous speech was written by a white man after Sealth died). Most call Chief Sealth Chief Seattle, for whom the city was named. But it is common in these parts not to get names correct, nor to care much about that. The city I live in is named after Mt. Tahoma which somehow came out as Tacoma. The mountain was later renamed Mt. Rainier by non-natives, for a white man that never even saw it.

Chief Sealth was a man who wanted peace with the invaders at all costs. Today his people, the Duwamish have no land, for that is what peace came to mean. Chief Leschi of the Nisquallys, on the other hand, after realizing that there was no honor in the invaders words, organized an armed resistance. After the Battle of Seattle (no, not the WTO protests) where the resisters were bombarded by navy ships, Chief Leschi was captured and hung for the "crime" of defending

his people.

It is an historical fact, something that the good-hearted liberals never speak of, that those First Nations that fought back were left with more land than those who did not fight back. Many of those that cooperated were left with no land at all like the Duwamish. The invaders did not respect noble words, they respected, or you may say they feared, direct actions of resistance. As long as the invaders knew that there were some who would back up their talk with action there would be some gains.

This is as true in today as it was long ago. The struggle over Fort Lawton in Seattle is one good example. Down here in the South Sound there were the fishing struggles, and the seizure and occupation of Cascadia by the Puyallups. These are things that the museum will not tell you about.

If you go down on the first floor of the museum you will find more Wobbly stuff on display, but you will not find anything that deals with Wobblies of today. In that way, we Wobblies are dealt with in the same manner as are the First Nations. We are museum pieces of days gone by. Yes, we were good dreamers of noble things, but progress over took our dreams, or so they would have you believe.

The museum also has an exhibit on

Woody Guthrie. There are many things to like about Woody Guthrie, but his legacy here in the Northwest is not one of them. For up here he was a pimp for BPA, "Roll On Columbia, Roll On." But his songs for the BPA did not speak of the many workers who died, neither do they speak of the land stolen from the First Nations, the lost fishing grounds, or the salmon. But who am I to point out reality in the face of a myth?

One of the events promoting the Guthrie exhibit is an event called "Hard-hitting Songs for Hard-Hit People: Joe Hill, Southern Working-class Heroes, and Woody Guthrie. The music of working-class people by scholars and performers."

I wonder, how does one become a scholar of "Hard-Hit People"? Are there college courses you can take that will teach how to become an "authority" on poor people? Like all other such eurocentric authority, this is another case when we must "question authority." For how to you explain what hungry feels like? Or what is it like to have the "Man" exploit your working years then cast you aside like needless waste when you grow old to work?

I was once asked to speak at a college where the movie "The Wobblies" was being shown. They wanted a real live Wobbly to show off, I guess like some type of museum

piece, for a schoolroom "show and tell." After the movie a college professor, an authority on labor, got up and rambled on about Wobblies and how we were idealistic dreamers of the past. Then he told me that I had five minutes to speak. I did not use up even half of that time. I got up and said, "Labor historians are to workers as anthropologists are to Indians. Don't believe a word they say." Then I walked out with the audience in shocked silence.

How could I tell them, in five minutes, the reality of toil? That Wobblies were not dreamers, but realists dealing with the reality of working people? And that we Wobblies continue to this day to organize and speak out around the realities of our class? There will always be Wobblies of some sort as long as there are parasites exploiting the labor of working folks.

I hope that someday I will be able to read Ralph Chaplin's poem honoring Chief Leschi, for it seems to me that such a poem written by a Wobbly is most fitting. There in that museum both Wobblies and the First Nations are simplified into exhibits of the past without much of a present nor future; I guess that is the only safe way for them to look upon both of us. But if I am a dreamer, my dream vision is of the time when the past clashes into the present to remake the future.

Labor songs with a country beat

BY JOSHUA FREEZE

Don't Want Your Millions, by Bucky Halker. Revolting Records, 2000. Available for \$15 from IWW Literature Department

Many musicians have made quality recordings of old labor songs: Utah Phillips, David Rovics, Joe Glazer, Billy Bragg, and who knows how many more, but Bucky Halker fooled me.

When I first listened to the country-rooted "Don't Want Your Millions," I thought a third of the songs were originals, since I didn't recognize them. They were among the best on the CD, and he must have dug deep to find five such excellent old miner's songs.

Many know Woody Guthrie's songs about miner tragedies, but Halker's versions of McCarty's "New Made Graves of Centralia" and Phillips Thompson's "Pennsylvania Miner" will bring tears to your eyes. The first is naturally about the Centralia Massacre, the second tells the story of the Pinkertons' assault on a Pennsylvania miners' community and its effects on one miner and his family.

"Dying Mine Brakeman" relates the sad tale of a brakeman who leapt from a train

that had derailed, but was crushed beneath the iron wheels. If ever a person was to wonder why the miners' unions have always been among the most militant, Halker reminds them with vivid recollections in song.

The other two uncommon ones are "The Coal Machine/What Will a Coal Miner Do" about the machines brought into the mine that intensified the job but were used to reduce their pay, and a memorial to the great friend of the miners, "Death of Mother Jones."

Not all the songs are unknown, though. Leadbelly's "Bourgeois Blues" graces the CD, telling the story of how he and his wife were treated in Washington DC because they were black. There are also several classic Guthrie songs redone by Halker and his crew. "Hard Travelin'" has a decidedly Johnny Cash feel to it. He also does good versions of "I Ain't Got no Home" and "Do Re Mi."

Of course no labor recording would be complete without at least a few Wobbly pieces, and Halker follows tradition. "Rebel Girl" and "Dump the Bosses" are featured and Studs Terkel, the well-known chronicler of poor and working people's lives, reads

"The Lumberjack's Prayer."

Finally there are two pieces on the recording not listed on the cover. The first has Studs Terkel's reading of "The Scabs Lament," a poem on the miseries of betraying of your class, and the final song is actually an original by Halker, "Heaven in Milwaukee," which although not a labor song at all, just might be my favorite on the recording and is on the way to becoming part of my own repertoire.

Curiously, the only song on the album I didn't really care for is the title track. It's not a bad song, and his version isn't bad, but it just didn't have the same effect the others did. But anyone who can make a recording where there's only one song that isn't so great is doing pretty good.

Playing guitar (and occasionally banjo) and accompanied in varying combinations by drums, bass, mandolin, pedal steel, organ, harmonium, balalaika, various types of unusual guitars and harmony voices, Halker presents an album that will be at home with the others in past pages of the IW. "Don't Want Your Millions" is true to the tradition of our union.

Today we are threatened by the globalization of the organizations and agreements of the economic master class. The greedy parasites realize the need of international organizations and bonds of common interest. In other words, they have been organizing unions of the rich and powerful.

We need to come to the same understanding and organize internationally in our common interests against our common foes. Every person who lives upon Mother Earth and is not of the class of the greedy parasites has something in common. We are all affected, in one way or another, by the global organization of those who aim for universal exploitation and control.

We should unite in common resistance. Leave no one behind, make no separate peace! In order to build the solidarity that we need, we should view the diversity of humanity as our strength, not as our weakness. And thus, in common respect and in common interests, we rise up as the many against the few who have kept us in bondage.

Excerpted from Arthur J. Miller, *Upon the Backs of Labor: Unruly Working Class Essays*. Working People's Library (PO Box 5464, Tacoma WA 98415), \$10.

If the workers take a notion,
They can stop all speeding trains;
Every ship upon the ocean
They can tie with mighty chains;
Every wheel in the creation,
Every mine and every mill,
Fleets and armies of the nations
Will at their command stand still

— Joe Hill

MAY DAY GREETINGS
FROM THE
PHILADELPHIA IWW
PO BOX 42777
PHILADELPHIA, PA 19101
215-763-1274

May Day continued from page 1

members of the Central Labor Union and the International Working People's Association were charged and convicted, even though there was no evidence connecting these men to the bomb or the still unknown bomb thrower.

Four men were hung: August Spies, George Engel, Adolph Fischer and Albert Parsons. One man, Louis Lingg, cheated the executioner by taking his own life the night before the hangings. Three other men were sent to prison for many years.

These men forever, in the hearts and minds of toilers, are remembered as the Haymarket Martyrs, and May Day honors their great sacrifice.

At the Second Labor and Socialist International Congress in Paris, May 1, 1890, was declared the International Day of Labor. And so it has been ever since.

May Day has been a time of resistance, of strikes, demonstrations and even of revolution. A time when the exploited raise up over all that they have lost, of all that is robbed from them each day of their lives.

The struggle of the many begins with each person individually, deciding that they

will no longer be willing slaves to the greed of a few. Movements, struggles, social change and revolution is built one person at a time. Some may think that one person is powerless in the face of the great power of the greedy parasites, but that is not true. One person can talk to another person, who then talks to another person, and so on. That is the foundation that the resistance is built upon.

Though the great powers that we face may seem all powerful, when you think about it you will see their weaknesses. Though they control wealth and production, they produce nothing. We do the producing. Though they have great armies to fight for their interests, they themselves fight no one. We make up their armies. Though they have their governments pass many laws that are used against us, it is we who enforce those laws upon ourselves. When we make the decision to no longer produce for them, no longer serve in their armies and no longer enforce their laws, and to begin to serve our own interests instead, they will be powerless to stop us.

When we decide to act in the common interest of all, for the well-being of all, a new world will be ours to build.

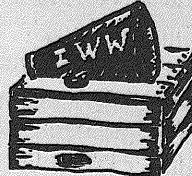
BOOKS FOR REBEL WORKERS

Happy May Day

Solidarity of Labour T-Shirt

The classic Walter Crane illustration of 1895. Printed on an unbleached cotton shirt, dark blue ink.

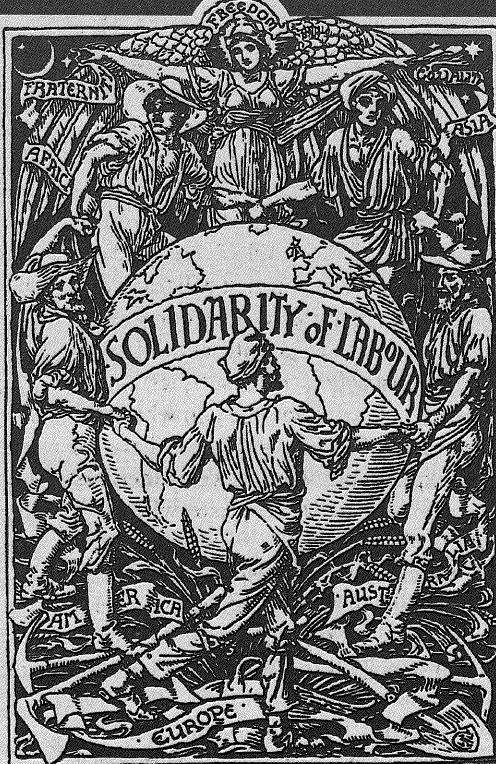
Specify S, M, L, XL \$12.00



Compact Disk:

Bucky Halker:
Don't Want Your Millions \$15

Includes little-known songs such as "New Made Graves of Centralia," "Pennsylvania Miner," "Dying Mine Brakeman," and "Death of Mother Jones." Also features Wobbly classics "Rebel Girl" and "Dump the Bosses" and spoken word by Studs Turkel. See review page 11.



Attention Workingmen!

MASS-MEETING

TO-NIGHT, at 7.30 o'clock,

HAYMARKET, Randolph St., Bet. Desplaines and Halsted.

Good Speakers will be present to denounce the latest atrocious act of the police, the shooting of our fellow-workers yesterday afternoon.

Workingmen Arm Yourselves and Appear in Full Force!

THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

Achtung, Arbeiter!

Massen-Versammlung

Heute Abend, 10 Uhr, auf dem

Heumarkt, Randolph-Straße, zwischen

Desplaines u. Halsted Str.

Gute Redner werden den neuen Schutzrechten der Polizei,

inden sie gegen Radfahrer unter Widerstand gehandelt.

Arbeiter, bewaffnet Euch und erscheint massenhaft!

Das Executive-Comitee.

10 Uhr werden den neuen Schutzrechten der Polizei,

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Workers resist bosses the whole world 'round

Bolivian retirees demonstrate

BY JUVENTUDES LIBERTARIAS

More than three thousand retired miners and industrial workers, averaging 70 years of age, began a long march from the city of Oruro to La Paz, hundreds of miles away, in mid-March. In the rain and the sun, facing nighttime cold and the health problems of age, the pensioners undertook this march to fight for a 100% increase in their pensions.

Gradually, the ranks of the retired miners were augmented by retired industrial and construction workers and delegations of miners of Potosí, Sucre and Cochabamba.

On March 16, there was a meeting between the retired workers' representatives and the National Director of Pensions, Jose Luis Perez, who accused the old people of being drunk and threatened them with police intervention. In response, their general assembly attempted to take the official hostage. He was only saved by the intervention of the bureaucrats.

The retired workers have been demanding a minimum monthly income of 1,000 bolivianos (US\$291). Covered by nylon, they trudged along in the cold and rain, despite suffering multiple afflictions such as rheumatism and arthritis.

Retired workers previously marched along the same route in August of 2000. At that time, they called for all retirement pensions to be brought up to 550 bolivianos (US\$90). But the government only gave an increase to retired miners, and ignored the others. One leader said "there is no other way" but for the retired people to demonstrate for their needs.

When the number of elderly workers in the March 2001 demonstration reached more than four thousand, the government began to get scared. So it mobilized all its forces to stop the march. Finally, after some tough negotiations, the government agreed to increase the minimum monthly pension from the equivalent of about US\$80 to \$145. But, the marchers had been demanding \$165.

Toward the end of the conflict, young workers in Cochabamba undertook their own demonstration in support of the retirees but were repressed by the authorities.

Now that the demonstrations are over, the government appears to be attempting to repudiate the agreement reached with the retirees.

We are approaching a true social cataclysm. There is an unstoppable economic recession; the government's corruption is scandalous; the political opposition is calling for the president's resignation; and working people in several industries are threatening to mobilize in protest. A major protest by rural people is being planned for May.

The people in Bolivia are experiencing an economic crisis verging on depression. It has been aggravated by the invasion of the multinationals, which is causing the collapse of all the productive sectors in the cities and the countryside. There have been increases in formal and informal unemployment and a gradual decapitalization of the financial system.

The crisis has brought about the dismissal of thousands of workers, the growth of an army of the unemployed and impoverished, the flight of thousands of Bolivians to other parts of the world in search of subsistence, the continual growth of citizen insecurity and the criminality that comes with hunger.

There is a spreading distrust of the government, an uncertainty about the future and a sense of frustration – a social ferment that can explode at any time.

juventudes_libertarias@latinmail.com



New Zealand News

BY WULLIE CLARK

Hundreds of workers at Auckland's Sky City Casino took direct action against their employers recently by refusing to work overtime at straight-time rates. Casino management has for a long time made ad hoc requests for workers to add a sixth day to their week; sick of not getting overtime for this, workers turned to the clause in their contract that allows them to decline overtime, forcing crises upon management during the casino's busy weekends. Eventually, management gave in and agreed to pay overtime.

A negotiation team from the Association of University Staff is currently talking with representatives of the right-wing boss of Auckland university, John Hood, about a new contract for non-academic staff. The negotiating team appears to have been captured by union bureaucrats, and has abandoned the basic demands voted up by rank-and-file AUS members at a series of mass meetings in November and January. The democratically-decided demand of a 4.5% pay increase, for instance, has been put on the shelf. It now seems that the negotiators are following the lead of the CTU bosses and asking for a "reasonable" 1.5% "increase." Of course, this figure actually represents a real pay cut, because it does not keep up with increases in the cost of living.

AUS activists unhappy with the behaviour of the negotiating team is discussing action against both their union leadership and John Hood's regime. A leaflet calling for the negotiators to walk away from the table and recommend strike action in support of a real pay rise, and advocating, in the meantime, a campaign of informal resistance on the job, in the shape of work to rule and the refusal of overtime, has been mooted.

Many parts of the university are experiencing crises, as a result of Hood's slash and burn spending approach and the hands-off attitude to the crisis in tertiary funding reflected in the government's fees cap 'policy,' but it's not clear whether there is broad support for a fightback. Activists managed to get a couple of good articles into the AUS bulletin, but the article that they intended as the issue's centrepiece has been suppressed by Lane Newton, right-wing President of AUS Auckland and personal friend of John Hood. Newton used her power of veto against the article, which draws parallels between the anti-casualisation struggle being fought on South Island wharves and the situation of workers on Auckland campus, and calls for solidarity with the wharfies.

Dockers close Brazil port

A dockworkers union at Brazil's largest port, Santos, went on strike March 27 against efforts by port management to assign more work contracts to nonunion teams. An earlier three-day strike ended Nov. 30 with a four-month agreement on work conditions and port safety. The dockworkers union has clashed with the government since a national port modernization law was passed in 1993 that aimed to eliminate union control over dock hiring policies.

Russian resistance to the 'Labor Code of Slavery'

BY MARK HARRIS

In the Russian Federation, there is presently a significant movement under way to resist the imposition by the International Monetary Fund of revisions in the basic law on labor rights (the Labor Code).

The Union Alliance Defense of Labor has been a leading force in the resistance, by engaging in direct action, strikes, and mass demonstrations. The Putin regime has been attempting to pass a significant rollback of current labor rights.

Under the Putin/IMF bill, the normal work week would be set to 56 hours, and workers' right to strike would be grievously curtailed; so much so that workers would be unable to strike even when faced with immediate risk of injury from unsafe working conditions or non-payment of wages.

Oleg Shein, co-chair of Defense of Labor, is a member of the State Duma (the lower house of the Russian legislature). He has asked for international solidarity in the struggle against the Labor Code of Slavery.

See <http://www.labordefense.org/International/LaborCode.html> for his appeal. The English language page for Defense of Labor can be found at: <http://www.labordefense.org>

Nicaraguan court orders reinstatement of fired unionists

The Appeal Tribunal for the Managua region has ordered the Taiwanese-owned Chentex / Nien Hsing company to immediately reinstate all nine fired union leaders and pay all back wages for the entire period they were illegally locked out.

The Tribunal is the highest court in the land, and its rulings are not open to appeal. The decision taken by the three justices of the labor section of the Tribunal is unprecedented. No transnational in the maquila sector had ever been ordered by the courts, in Nicaragua or elsewhere in Central America, to reinstate fired union leaders prior to this ruling.

The court's decision is a complete and total vindication for the Chentex union. As the union insisted all along, its leaders were illegally fired.

By implication, the Court's ruling also establishes that the struggle at the Chentex factory was a legitimate labor conflict, and that the bogus criminal charges brought against the fired union leaders by the company should be dropped. Chentex's attempt to "criminalize" legitimate union activities has been thoroughly defeated. The legal department of the Nicaraguan human rights group CENIDH argued the case on behalf of the Chentex union.

The decision exposes U.S. retailer Kohl's for the hypocrisy of its so-called monitoring program – led by PriceWaterhouseCooper – which could find no worker rights violations at Chentex, let alone the illegal mass firing of all nine union leaders.

Colombian labor under the gun

In Colombia the security and armed forces and their paramilitary allies often accuse trade unionists of being guerrilla sympathizers or auxiliaries. Those they accuse are frequently harassed, tortured and killed. During 2000, 112 trade unionists were murdered. In December 2000, a leading trade union leader, Wilson Borja Diaz, had to flee Colombia after he was shot and wounded by gunmen. Several active and retired police officers have been linked to the attack. On 15 February, 25 unionists affiliated to the Central Unitaria de Trabajadores (CUT), Trade Union Confederation, occupied the Ministry of Labor and Social Security in protest at the threats, harassment and persecution that trade unionists continue to face.

The systematic persecution of trade unionists in Colombia has been going on for years. During the 1998 national strike, seven trade union leaders, including CUT Vice-president Jorge Ortega Garcia, were shot dead. Those responsible for the killings have never been brought to justice.

Guerrilla forces and armed opposition groups have also committed serious violations of international humanitarian law, for example by executing those they accuse of being security force or paramilitary collaborators and supporters.

In the latest act of paramilitary terror, union leader Jaime Alberto Duque Castro is believed to have been abducted by army-backed paramilitaries on 24 March. We should be very concerned for his safety, and for that of other trade union members in the area, especially given that at least 25 trade unionists have been killed this year, most of them by paramilitaries.

Paramilitaries with the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia, (AUC) Self-Defense Groups of Colombia, reportedly abducted Duque Castro. He had gone to watch a football match in the town of Santa Barbara, Antioquia, with other unionists. The paramilitaries apprehended him at the match, and reportedly beat him up before taking him away.

Duque Castro is the president of the Sindicato de Trabajadores de Cementos El Cairo, El Cairo Cement Workers Union. Prior to his abduction, the AUC had reportedly been keeping SUTIMAC under surveillance.

Please send messages expressing concern for the safety of Jaime Alberto Duque Castro, who was abducted on 24 March, and for that of other SUTIMAC members; urging the authorities to take all necessary steps to establish his whereabouts, and to secure his safety and immediate release; calling for a full and impartial investigation into the abduction, with those responsible brought to justice; asking the authorities what measures they are going to take to guarantee the safety of those at risk; and urging that the authorities take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups.

Appeals should be sent to: Señor Presidente Andres Pastrana Arango, Presidente de la Republica, Palacio de Narino, Carrera 8 No. 7-26, Santafe de Bogota, Colombia; Fax: 011 57 1 336 2109; Señor Armando Estrada Villa, Ministro del Interior, Palacio Echeverry, Carrera 8a, No. 8-09, piso 20., Santafe de Bogota, Colombia; fax: 011 57 1 341 9583.

Please send copies to: CSPP, AA 22803, Bogota, Colombia and Ambassador Luis Alberto Moreno, Embassy of Colombia, 2118 Leroy Pl. NW, Washington DC 20008.

Comparable wages

A metalworker in Denmark or Germany has to work 17-19 hours to be able to buy a refrigerator. If he lives in Austria, Japan or Sweden he has to work about 50 hours to buy a refrigerator. In Lithuania and South Africa, he has to work about 200 hours.